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Uncle Walt

KE2370

Arthur C. Peters
1111 S. Wall St.
Spokane, Wash.

Uncle Walt

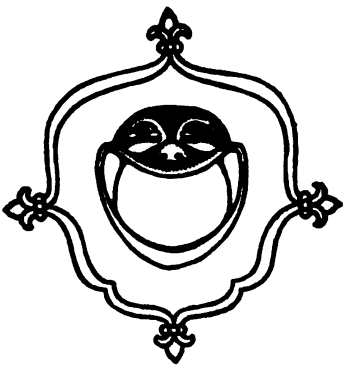
To George Matthew Adams

From his Accomplice

Ward D. Mason

Uncle Walt

[WALT MASON]



The Poet Philosopher

Chicago
George Matthew Adams
1911

KE 2370

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"Uncle Walt" on his favorite steed. Drawn by John T. McCutcheon

A Poet of the People

WALT MASON'S Prose Rhymes are read daily by approximately ten million readers. A newspaper service sells these rhymes to two hundred newspapers with a combined daily circulation of nearly five million, and assuming that five people read each newspaper—which is the number agreed upon by publicity experts—it may be called a fair guess to say that two out of every five readers of newspapers read Mr. Mason's poems.

So the ten million daily readers is a reasonably accurate estimate. No other American verse-maker has such a daily audience.

Walt Mason is, therefore, the Poet Laureate of the American Democracy. He is the voice of the people.

Put to a vote, Walt would be elected to the Laureate's job, if he got a vote for each reader. And, generally speaking, men would vote as they read.

The reason Walt Mason has such a large number of readers is because he says what the average man is thinking so that the average man can understand it.

The philosophy of Walt Mason is the philosophy of America. Briefly it is this: The fiddler must be paid; if you don't care to pay, don't dance. In the meantime—grin and bear it, because you've got to bear it, and you might as well grin. But don't try to lie out of it. The Lord hates a cheerful liar.

A Poet of the People

This is what the American likes to hear. For that is the American idea about the way the world is put together. So he reads Walt Mason night and morning and smiles and takes his knife and cuts out the piece and carries it in his vest pocket, or her handbag.

It will interest the ten million readers of Walt Mason's rhymes to know that they are written in Emporia, Kansas, in the office of the Emporia Gazette, after Mr. Mason has done a day's work as editorial writer and telegraph editor of an afternoon paper. The rhymes are written on a typewriter as rapidly as he would write if he were turning out prose.

Day after day, year after year, the fountain flows. There is no poison in it. And sometimes real poetry comes welling up from this Pierian spring at 517 Merchant street, Emporia, Kansas, U. S. A.

In the meantime we do not claim its medicinal properties will cure everything. But it is good for sore eyes; it cures the blues; it sweetens the temper, cleanses the head, and aids the digestion. In cases of heart trouble it has been known to unite torn ligaments and encourage large families.

And a gentleman over there takes a bottle! Step up quickly; remember we are merely introducing this great natural remedy. Our supply is limited. In a moment the music will begin.

To JAMES C. MASON

For the happy, youthful days
That long since had an end;
For the distant trodden ways
That we no more may wend;
For the dreams of woven gold
And the memories of old,
These little tales are told,
My brother and my friend.

"I to swing the shining axe, you to take a few swift whacks."

A Glance at History

CHARLES THE FIRST, with stately walk, made the journey to the block. As he paced the street along, silence fell upon the throng; from that throng there burst a sigh, for a king was come to die! Charles upon the scaffold stood, in his veins no craven blood; calm, serene, he viewed the crowd, while the headsman said, aloud: "Cheer up, Charlie! Smile and sing! Death's a most delightful thing! I will cure your hacking cough, when I chop your headpiece off! Headache, toothache—they're a bore! You will never have them more! Cheer up, Charlie, dance and yell! Here's the axe, and all is well! I, though but a humble dub, represent the Sunshine Club, and our motto is worth while: 'Do Not Worry—Sing and Smile!' Therefore let us both be gay, as we do our stunt to-day; I to swing the shining axe, you to take a few swift whacks. Lumpty-doodle, lumpty-ding, do not worry, smile and sing!"

Uncle Walt

Longfellow

SINGER of the kindly song, minstrel of the gentle lay, when the night is dark and long, and beset with thorns the way—in the poignant hour of pain, in this weary worldly war, there is comfort in thy strain, courage in "Excelsior." When the city bends us down, with its weight of bricks and tiles, lead us, poet, from the town, to the fragrant forest aisles, where the hemlocks ever moan, like old Druids clad in green, as they sighed, when all alone, wandered sad Evangeline. Writer of the cleanly page, teacher of the golden truth; still I love thee in my age, as I loved thee in my youth. In some breasts a fiercer fire flamed, than ever thou hast known; but no mortal minstrel's lyre ever gave a purer tone. Singer of the kindly song, minstrel of the gentle lay, time is swift and art is long, and thy fame will last alway.

Uncle Walt

In Politics

HIS DAYS were joyous and serene, his life was pure, his record clean; folks named their children after him, and he was in the social swim; ambitious lads would say: "I plan to be just such a worthy man!" But in the fullness of his years, the tempter whispered in his ears, and begged that he would make the race for county judge, or some such place. And so he yielded to his fate, and came forth as a candidate. The night before election day they found him lying, cold and gray, the deadest man in all the land, this message in his icy hand: "The papers that opposed my race have brought me into deep disgrace; I find that I'm a fiend unloosed; I robbed a widow's chicken roost, and stole an orphan's Easter egg, and swiped a soldier's wooden leg. I bilked a heathen of his joss, and later kidnapped Charlie Ross; I learn, with something like alarm, that I designed the Gunness farm, and also, with excessive grief, that Black Hand cohorts call me chief. I thought myself a decent man, whose record all the world might scan; but now, alas, too late! I see that all the depths of infamy have soiled me with their reeking shame, and so it's time to quit the game."

Uncle Walt

The Human Head

THE GREATEST gift the gods bestowed on mortal was his dome of thought; it sometimes seems a useless load, when one is tired, and worn and hot; it sometimes seems a trifling thing, less useful than one's lungs or slats; a mere excuse, it seems, to bring us duns from men who deal in hats. Some men appreciate their heads, and use them wisely every day, and every passing minute sheds new splendor on their upward way; while some regard their heads as junk, mere idle knobs upon their necks; such men are nearly always sunk in failure, and are gloomy wrecks. I know a clerk who's served his time in one old store for twenty-years; he's marked his fellows climb, and climb—and marked with jealousy and tears; he's labored there since he was young; he'll labor there till he is dead; he never rose a single rung, because he never used his head. I know a poorhouse in the vale, where fifty-seven paupers stay; they paw the air and weep and wail, and cuss each other all the day; and there they'll loll while life endures, and there they'll die in pauper beds; their chances were as good as yours—but then they never used their heads. O human head! Majestic box! O wondrous can, from labels free! If man is craving fame or rocks, he'll get them if he uses thee!

Uncle Walt

The Universal Help

MY cow's gone dry, my hens won't lay, my horse has got the croup; the hot winds spoiled my budding hay, and I am in the soup. And while my life is sad and sore, and earthly joys are few, I'll write a note to Theodore; he'll tell me what to do. I wasn't home when Fortune called, my feet had strayed afar; I fear that I am going bald, and I have got catarrh. The wolf is howling at my door, I've naught to smoke or chew; but I shall write to Theodore—he'll tell me what to do. My Sunday suit is old and sere, I'm wearing last year's lids; my aunt is coming for a year, to visit, with her kids. They will not trust me at the store, and I am feeling blue, so I shall write to Theodore—he'll tell me what to do. When we are weary and distraught, from worldly strife and care, and we're denied the balm we sought, and given black despair, ah, then, my friends, there is one chore devolves on me and you; we'll simply write to Theodore—he'll tell us what to do.

Uncle Walt

Little Sunbeam

SHE WAS sweet and soft and clinging, and he always found her singing, when he came home from his labors as the night was closing in; she was languishing and slender, and her eyes were deep and tender, and he simply couldn't tell her that her coffee was a sin. Golden hair her head was crowning; she was fond of quoting Browning, and she knew a hundred legends of the olden, golden time; and her heart was full of yearning for the Rosicrucian learning, and he simply couldn't tell her that the beefsteak was a crime. She was posted on Pendennis, and she knew the songs of Venice, and he listened to her prattle with an effort to look pleased; and she liked the wit of Weller—and he simply couldn't tell her that the eggs he had for breakfast had been laid by hens diseased. So she filled his home with beauty, and she did her wifely duty, did it as she understood it, and her conscience didn't hurt, when dyspepsia boldly sought him, and the sexton came and got him, and his tortured frame was buried 'neath a wagon-load of dirt. O, those marriageable misses, thinking life all love and kisses, mist and moonshine, glint and glamour, stardust borrowed from the skies! Man's a gross and sordid lummix—men are largely made of stomachs, and the songs of all the sirens will not take the place of pies!

The Flag

BRIGHT-HUED and beautiful, it floats upon the summer air; and every thread of it denotes the love that's woven there; the love of veterans whose tread has sounded on the fields of red; and women old, who mourn their dead, but mourn without despair. Bright-hued and beautiful, it courts caresses of the breeze; and, straining at its staff it sports, in flaunting ecstasies; and other flags, that once were gay, long, long ago were laid away, and many men, whose heads are gray, are thinking now of these. Serene and beautiful it waves, the flag our fathers knew; in Freedom's sunny air it laves, and gains a brighter hue; and may it still the symbol be of all that makes a nation free; still may we cherish Liberty, and to our God be true.

Doc Jonnesco

"O DOC," I cried, "I humbly beg, that you will amputate my leg." The doctor cheerfully complied, and shot some dope into my hide, and made his bucksaw fairly sail, until it struck a rusty nail. "Hoot, mon!" he said, quite undismayed, "I'll have to finish with a spade." And as he dug and toiled away, we talked about the price of hay, the recent frightful rise in pork, the sugar grafters in New York, the things we found in Christmas socks, the flurry in Rock Island stocks, the hookworm and the hangman's noose, the bright career of Captain Loose. I felt no pain or ache or shock; it pleased me much to watch the doc; and when the job was done, I said: "Now that you're here, cut off my head." With skillful hands he wrought and wrought, and soon cut off my dome of thought, and when I asked him for his bill: "There is no charge, already, still; I work for Science, not for scads, so keep the dollars of your dads; to banish pain is my desire; to nothing more do I aspire; if I may win that goal, you bet, I'll be so happy, always, yet!" Is there a more heroic game? Could any man have nobler aim? One poet, old, and bald and fat, to this great man takes off his hat!

Uncle Walt

Little Girl

LITTLE GIRL, so glad and jolly, playing with your home-made dolly, built of rags and straw, fill the sunny air with laughter, heedless of the sorrow after—that is childhood's law! Let no sad and sordid vision cheat you of the joy Elysian that to youth belongs; let no prophecy of sorrow scheduled for a sad tomorrow still your joyous songs! Soon enough will come the worry, and the labors, and the hurry, soon you'll cook and scrub; soon with milliners and drapers you will fuss, and read long papers, at the Culture Club. Lithe your form, but soon you'll force it in a torture-chamber corset that will make you bawl; and those little feet, that twinkle, you will squeeze, until they wrinkle, into shoes too small. And those sunny locks so tangled will be tortured and kedangled into waves and curls; and you'll buy complexion powder, and your bonnets will be louder than the other girl's. Little girl, with home-made dolly, cut out woe and melancholy, jump and sing and play! Fill the rippling air with laughter! Tears and corns will follow after! This is childhood's day!

Uncle Walt

The Landlady

I RUN a hash bazaar, just up the street; there all my boarders are yelling for meat; boarders carniverous, boarders herbiverous; Allah deliver us! just watch them eat! Boarders are ravenous, all the world o'er; "feed till you spavin us," thus they implore; boarders are gluttonous, roastbeef and muttonous; "come and unbutton us, so we'll eat more!" Little they pay me for chicken and rice; yet they waylay me for dainties of price; "bring us canary birds"—these are their very words, bawling like hairy Kurds—"bring them on ice!" I give them tea and toast, jelly and jam, some kind of stew or roast, codfish or ham; their words are Chaucerous: "Dame Cup-and-Saucerous, bring us rhinoceros, boiled with a yam!" I run a boarding booth, as I have said; there Age and Smiling Youth, raise the Old Ned; maybe the clamoring, knocking and hammering bunch will be stammering, when I am dead!

Twilight Reveries

AT THAT HOUR supremely quiet, when the dusk and darkness blend, and the sordid strife and riot of the day are at an end; when the bawling and the screaming of the mart have died away, then I like to lie a-dreaming of my castles in Cathay. I would roam in flowery spaces watered by the fabled streams, I would travel starry spaces on the winged feet of dreams; I would float across the ages to a more heroic time, when inspired were all ages, and the warriors sublime. At that hour supremely pleasing, dreams are all knocked galley west, by the phonograph that's wheezing: "Birdie, Dear, I Love You Best."

Uncle Walt

King and Kid

THE KING sat up on his jeweled throne, and he heaved a sigh that was like a groan, for his crown was hard, and it bruised his head, and his scepter weighed like a pig of lead; the ladies smirked as they came to beg; the knights were pulling the royal leg. The king exclaimed: "If I had my wish, I would cut this out, and I'd go and fish. For what is pomp to a weary soul that yearns and yearns for the fishing hole; the throne's a bore and the crown a gawd, and I'd swap the lot for a bamboo rod, and a can of worms and a piece of string—but there's no such luck for a poor old king!" And a boy who passed by the palace high, to fish for trout in the streamlet nigh, looked up in awe at the massive walls, and caught a glimpse of the marble halls, and he said to himself: "Oh, hully chee! Wisht I was the king, and the king was me! To reign all day with your crown on straight is a whole lot better'n diggin' bait, and fishin' round when the fish won't bite, and gettin' licked for your luck at night!"

Uncle Walt

The Little Green Tents

THE LITTLE green tents where the soldiers sleep, and the sunbeams play and the women weep, are covered with flowers today; and between the tents walk the weary few, who were young and stalwart in 'sixty-two, when they went to the war away. The little green tents are built of sod, and they are not long, and they are not broad, but the soldiers have lots of room; and the sod is part of the land they saved, when the flag of the enemy darkly waved, the symbol of dole and doom. The little green tent is a thing divine; the little green tent is a country's shrine, where patriots kneel and pray; and the brave men left, so old, so few, were young and stalwart in 'sixty-two, when they went to the war away!

"The Judge who knows the hearts of men may find a desert or a glen for souls that love the wild."

Uncle Walt

Geronimo Aloft

THE SOD is o'er the dauntless head, the fierce old eyes are dim and dead, the martial heart is dust; they say he died in sanctity, and his wild soul, of fetters free, went forth to join the just. But will the joys of Paradise, as we imagine them, suffice to hold Geronimo? Will joyous song and endless calm to that bold spirit be a balm, while silent eons flow? But Heaven is a region fair, and there may be long reaches there, to give the savage space to ride his steed o'er field and fell and raise his fierce, defiant yell, in foray and in race. The Judge who knows the hearts of men may find a desert or a glen for souls that love the wild; and through the gates perchance may jog the hunter's pinto and his dog, his painted squaw and child.

Uncle Walt

The Venerable Excuse

YOU SAY your grandma's dead, my lad, and you, bowed down with woe, to see her laid beneath the mold believe you ought to go; and so you ask a half day off, and you may have that same; alas, that grannies always die when there's a baseball game! Last spring, if I remember right, three grandmas died for you, and you bewailed the passing, then, of souls so warm and true; and then another grandma died—a tall and stately dame; the day they buried her there was a fourteen-inning game. And when the balmy breeze of June among the willows sighed, another grandma closed her eyes and crossed the Great Divide; they laid her gently to her rest beside the churchyard wall, the day we lammed the stuffing from the Rubes from Minnepaul. Go forth, my son, and mourn your dead, and shed the scalding tear, and lay a simple wreath upon your eighteenth grandma's bier; while you perform this solemn task I'll to the grandstand go, and watch our pennant-winning team make soupbones of the foe.

Uncle Walt

Silver Threads

SING A SONG of long ago, now the weary day is done, and the breeze is sighing low dirges for the vanished sun; sing a song of other days, ere our hearts were tired and old; sing the sweetest of old lays: "Silver Threads Among the Gold." We who feebly hold the track in the gloaming of life's day, love the songs that take us back to life's springtime, far away, when our hope had airy wing, and our hearts were strong and bold, and at eve we used to sing "Silver Threads Among the Gold." Then our hair no silver knew, and these eyes, that shrunken seem, were the brightest brown or blue, and old age was but a dream; but the years have taken flight, and life's evening bells are tolled; so, my children, sing tonight, "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Uncle Walt

The Poet Balks

IF OLD JIM RILEY came to town, to read a bundle of his rhyme, I guess you couldn't hold me down—I'd want to hear him every time. I wouldn't heed the tempest's shriek; I'd walk ten miles and not complain, to hear Jim Hoosier Riley speak. But I would not go round a block to see a statesman saw the air, to hear a hired spellbinder talk, like a faker at the county fair. For statesmen are as thick as fleas, and poets, they are far between; one song that lingers on the breeze is worth a million yawps, I ween. If John McCutcheon came to town, to make some pictures on the wall, I'd tear the whole blamed doorway down to be the first one in the hall; you couldn't keep me in my bed if I was dying there of croup; the push would find me at the head of the procession, with a whoop. But I won't push my fat old frame across a dozen yards of bricks, to list to men whose only fame is based on pull and politics.

Uncle Walt

The Penny Saved

IT IS WISE to save the pennies when the pennies come your way, for you're more than apt to need them when arrives the rainy day; and when Famine comes a-whooping with the cross-bones on her vest, then the fellow with the bundle has the edge on all the rest. I admire the man who's saving, if he doesn't save too hard, if he doesn't think a dollar bigger than the courthouse yard; and I like to see him salting down the riches that he's struck, if he always has a quarter for the guy that's out of luck. When the winter comes upon us, yelling like a baseball fan, then it's nice to have some boodle in an old tomato can; when there's sickness in the wigwam, and we have to call the doc, then it's nice to have a package hidden in the eight-day clock; when Old Age, the hoary rascal, comes a-butting in at last, then it's nice to have some rubles that you cornered in the past; and the man who saves the pennies is a dandy and a duck—if he always has a quarter for the guy that's out of luck.

Uncle Walt

Home Life

NOW THE NIGHTS are growing longer, and the frost is in the air, and it's nice to hug the fireside in your trusty rocking chair, with the good wife there beside you, feeding cookies to the cat, while the energetic children play the dickens with your hat. O, it's nice to look around you, and to feel that you're a king, that your coming home at evening makes your joyous subjects sing! So you read some twenty chapters of old Gibbon's dope on Rome, and you know what human bliss is in your humble little home! There is really nothing better in the way of earthly bliss, than to toddle home at evening, and to get a welcome kiss, and to know the kids who greet you at the pea-green garden gate, have been wailing, broken-hearted, that you were two minutes late! There is nothing much more soothing than a loving woman's smile, when she sees your bow-legs climbing o'er the bargain counter stile! If you don't appreciate it, then the bats are in your dome, for the greatest king a-living is the monarch of a home!

Uncle Walt

Eagles and Hens

THE EAGLE ought to have a place among the false alarms; we place its picture on our coins, and on our coat of arms; but what did eagles ever do but frolic in the sun? They'd be in jail for larceny if justice should be done. They are not half so good to eat as mallard duck or grouse; they'd surely cause a panic in a section boarding house; and never in this weary world was farmer seen to go, to trade a pail of eagle eggs for nails or calico. The humble hen, on t'other hand, still helps the world along; she lifts the farmer's mortgage as she trills her morning song; she yields the fragrant omelet, and when reduced to pie, she makes the boarder feel that he at last is fit to die. The eagle does not stir the souls of earnest, thoughtful men; and so let's take him from the shield and substitute the hen.

Uncle Walt

The Sunday Paper

I SPENT five cents for the Sunday "Dart," and hauled it home in a two-wheeled cart; I piled the sections upon the floor, till they reached as high as the kitchen door; I hung the chromos upon the wall, though there wasn't room to hang them all, and the yard was littered some ten feet deep with "comic sections" that made me weep; and there were sections of pink and green, a woman's section and magazine, and sheets of music the which if played would quickly make an audience fade; and there were patterns for women's gowns and also for gentlemen's hand-me-downs; and a false mustache and a rubber doll, and a deck of cards and a parasol. Now men are busy with dray and cart, a-hauling away the Sunday "Dart."

Uncle Walt

The Nation's Hope

THE NATION'S sliding down the path that leads to Ruin's lair, and all of Ruin's dogs of wrath will chew its vitals there; each day we deeper plunge in grief; we'll soon have reached the worst; why don't we turn, then, for relief, to William Randolph Hurst? It seems we haven't any sense, that we these ills endure; he's told us oft, in confidence, that he alone is pure; he is the bulwark of our hope—our last shield and our first; then let's rely upon the dope of William Randolph Hurst. He offers us the helping hand, he fain would be our guide; and still we wreck this blooming land, and let all virtue slide; of all that is the country's best we're making wienerwurst; O let us lean upon the breast of William Randolph Hurst! He stands and waits, serene, sublime, he beckons and he sings! He wears a halo all the time, and he is growing wings! So let us quit the course that harms, forsake the things accurst, and rest, like children, in the arms of William Randolph Hurst!

Uncle Walt

Football

THE GAME was ended, and the noise, at last had died away, and now they gathered up the boys where they in pieces lay. And one was hammered in the ground by many a jolt and jar; some fragments never have been found, they flew away so far. They found a stack of tawny hair, some fourteen cubits high; it was the half-back, lying there, where he had crawled to die. They placed the pieces on a door, and from the crimson field, that hero then they gently bore, like soldier on his shield. The surgeon toiled the livelong night above the gory wreck; he got the ribs adjusted right, the wishbone and the neck. He soldered on the ears and toes, and got the spine in place, and fixed a gutta-percha nose upon the mangled face. And then he washed his hands and said: "I'm glad that task is done!" The half-back raised his fractured head, and cried: "I call this fun!"

Uncle Walt

Health Food

THE DOCTOR is sure that my health is poor, he says that I waste away; so bring me a can of the shredded bran, and a bale of the toasted hay; O feed me on rice and denatured ice, and the oats that the horses chew, and a peck of slaw and a load of straw and a turnip and squash or two. The doctor cries that it won't be wise to eat of the things I like; if I make a break at a sirloin steak, my stomach is sure to strike; I dare not reach for the luscious peach, or stab at the lemon pie; if I make a pass at the stew, alas! I'm sure to curl up and die. If a thing looks good, it must be eschewed, if bad, I may eat it down; so bring me a jar of the rich pine tar from the Health Food works up town; and bring me a bag of your basic slag, and a sack of your bolted prunes, and a bowl of slop from the doctor's shop, and ladle it in with spoons! I will have to feed on the jimson weed, and the grass that the cows may leave, for the doctor's sure that my health is poor, and I know that he'd not deceive.

"O, it may be all right for a woman so old,
to leap o'er the table and chairs."

Uncle Walt

Physical Culture

MY GRANDMOTHER suffered and languished in pain, till she read in a magazine ad, that a woman should put on a sweater and train, and help the Delsartean fad. And now when I go to my midday repast, no meal is made ready for me; my grandmother's climbing a forty-foot mast or shinning up into a tree. The house has a stairway that she will not use she always slides down on the rail; she's spoiled all the floors with her spiked sprinting shoes, and she laughs when I put up a wail. O, it may be all right for a woman so old, to leap o'er the table and chairs, while I try to fill up on the grub that is cold, with the dishes all piled on the stairs. Today I protested with many a tear, made a moan like a maundering dunce; and she kicked all the lights from the brass chandelier, and turned forty handsprings at once. I told her I never could prosper and thrive, on victuals unfit for a man; she offered to throw me three falls out of five, Graeco-Roman or catch-as-catch-can.

The Nine Kings

NINE MONARCHS followed in the gloom when Edward journeyed to the tomb; nine monarchs walked, as in a dream—enough to make a baseball team—and cast upon King Edward's bier the futile tribute of a tear. And at his task the sexton sings (the man who digs the graves for kings): "Nine monarchs, in their brave array, are bending over Edward's clay; and does the silent sovereign care, or does he know that they are there? And can the tears of monarchs nine make those dim eyes of Edward's shine? And if they give their nine commands, can they bring life to those cold hands? Can all their armies and their ships bring laughter to those dead white lips? Can their nine crowns and sceptres nine, bring to the dead the life divine? Nine paupers at a pauper's grave, who claw their rags and weep and rave, can do as much to help the dead, as those nine kings at Edward's bed."

The Eyes of Lincoln

SAD EYES, that were patient and tender, sad eyes, that were steadfast and true, and warm with the unchanging splendor of courage no ills could subdue! Eyes dark with the dread of the morrow, and woe for the day that was gone, the sleepless companions of sorrow, the watchers that witnessed the dawn. Eyes tired from the clamor and goading, and dim from the stress of the years, and hollowed by pain and foreboding, and strained by repression of tears. Sad eyes that were wearied and blighted, by visions of sieges and wars, now watch o'er a country united from the luminous slopes of the stars!

Uncle Walt

The Better Land

THERE IS a better world, they say, where tears and woe are done away; there shining hosts in fields sublime are playing baseball all the time, and there (where no one ever sins) the home team nearly always wins. Upon that bright and sunny shore, we'll never need to sorrow more; no umpires on the field are slain, no games are called because of rain. So let us live that we may fly, on snowy pinions, when we die, to where the pitcher never falls, or gives a man first base on balls; where goose-eggs don't adorn the score, and shortstops fumble never more.

Uncle Walt

Knowledge is Power

ONE DAY a farmer found a bone; he thought at first it was a stone, and threw it at a passing snake ere he discovered his mistake. But when he knew it was a bone, and not a diamond or a stone, he took it to an ancient sage, who said: "In prehistoric age, this was the shin-bone of a Thor-dineriomegantosaur-megopium-permastodon-letheriumsohelpmejohn." The farmer cried: "Dad bing my eyes! Was ever man so wondrous wise? He gazes on a piece of bone, that I supposed to be a stone, and, with a confidence sublime, he looks across the void of time, and gives this fossil bone a name, the fragment of some creature's frame! To have such knowledge, sir, as thine, I'd give those fertile farms of mine." "Don't envy me," the sage replied, and shook his weary head, and sighed, "Your life to me seems full and sweet—you always have enough to eat!"

Uncle Walt

The Pie Eaters

A SPORT in New Jersey, whose name is mislaid, has issued a challenge, serene, undismayed. He claims he can shovel more pies in his hold than any man living, and puts up the gold to back up his challenge, so here is a chance for pie eating experts their fame to advance. Now here is a sport that I like to indorse; a man can eat pies and not work like a horse; no heart-breaking training for wearisome weeks; no sparring or wrestling with subsidized freaks; no rubbing or grooming or skipping the rope, no toning your nerves with some horse doctor's dope; no bones dislocated, or face pounded sore, no wearing gum boots in a whirlpool of gore. The pie eater's training no anguish implies; he starves till his stomach is howling for pies; he loosens his belt to the uttermost hole, and says to the umpire: "All right! Let her roll!" There's gold for the winner, and honor and fame, and even the loser's ahead of the game.

The Sexton's Inn

ONLY A LITTLE longer, and the journey is done, my friend! Only a little further, and the road will have an end! The shadows begin to lengthen, the evening soon will close, and it's ho for the Inn of the Sexton, the inn where we'll all repose. The inn has no Bridal Chamber, no suites for the famed or great; the guests, when they go to slumber, are all of the same estate; the chambers are small and narrow, the couches are hard and cold, and the grinning, fleshless landlord is not to be bribed with gold. A sheet for the proud and haughty, a sheet for the beggar guest; a sheet for the blooming maiden—a sheet for us all, and rest! No bells at the dawn of morning, no rap at the chamber door, but silence is there, and slumber, for ever and ever more. Then ho for the Inn of the Sexton, the inn where we all must sleep, when our hands are done with their toiling, and our eyes have ceased to weep!

He Who Forgets

THE MERCHANT said, in caustic tones: "James Henry Charles Augustus Jones, please get your pay and leave the store; I will not need you any more. Important chores you seem to shun; you're always leaving work undone; and when I ask the reason why, you heave a sad and soulful sigh, and idly scratch your dome of thought, and feebly say: "Oh, I forgot!" James Henry Charles Augustus Jones, this world's a poor resort for drones, for men with heads so badly set that their long suit is to forget. No man will ever write his name upon the shining wall of fame, or soar aloft on glowing wings because he can't remember things. I've noticed that such chaps as you remember when your pay is due; and when the noontime whistles throb, your memory is on the job; and when a holiday's at hand, your recollection isn't canned. The failures on life's busy way, the paupers, friendless, wan and gray, throughout their bootless days, like you, forgot the things they ought to do. So take your coat, and draw your bones, James Henry Charles Augustus Jones!"

Uncle Walt

Poor Father

CHILDREN, HUSH! for father's resting; he is sitting, tired and sore, with his feet upon the table and his hat upon the floor. He is wearied and exhausted by the labors of the day; he has talked about the tariff since the dawn was cold and gray; he has lost eight games of checkers, for his luck today was mean, and that luck was still against him when he bucked the slot machine; so his nerves are under tension, and his brow is dark with care, and the burdens laid upon him seem too great for him to bear. Stop the clock, for it annoys him; throttle that canary bird; take the baby to the cellar, where its howling won't be heard; you must speak in whispers, children, for your father's tired and sore, and he seems to think the ceiling is some kind of cuspidor. Oh, he's broken down and beaten by the long and busy day; he's been sitting in the feedstore on a bale of prairie hay, telling how the hungry grafters have the country by the throat, how the tariff on dried apples robs the poor man of his coat, how this nasty polar rumpus might be settled once for all—and his feet are on the table, and his back's against the wall; let him find his home a quiet and a heart-consoling nest, for the father's worn and weary, and his spirit longs for rest.

Uncle Walt

The Idle Question

I'M TIRED of the bootless questions that rise in my vagrant mind; I gaze at the stars and wonder how many may be behind; a myriad worlds are whirling, concealed by the nearer spheres; and there they have coursed their orbits a million million years. I gaze at the spangled spaces, the bed of a billion stars, from the luminous veil of Venus, to the militant glare of Mars, and wonder, when all is ended, as ended all things must be, if the Captain will then remember a poor little soul like me. I'm tired of the endless questions that come, and will not begone, when I face to the East and witness the miracle of the dawn; the march of the shining coursers o'er forest and sea and land; the splendor of gorgeous colors applied by the Captain's hand; the parting of crimson curtains afar in the azure steep; the hush of a world-wide wonder, when even the zephyrs sleep. And I look on the birth of morning as millions have gazed before, and question the wave that questions the rocks and the sandy shore. "When all of these things are ended, as ended these things must be, will the Captain of all remember a poor little soul like me?"

Uncle Walt

Politeness

IN MY YOUTH I knew an aleck who was most exceeding smart, and his flippant way of talking often broke the hearer's heart. He was working for a grocer in a little corner store, taking down the wooden shutters, sweeping up the greasy floor, and he always answered pertly, and he had a sassy eye, and the people often asked him if he wouldn't kindly die. Oh, the festive years skedaddled, and the children of that day, now are bent beneath life's burdens, and their hair is turning gray; and the flippant one is toiling in the same old corner store, taking down the ancient shutters, sweeping up the greasy floor. In the same old sleepy village lived a springald so polite that to hear him answer questions was a genuine delight; he was working in a foundry where they dealt in eggs and cheese, and the work was hard and tiresome, but he always tried to please. And today he's boss of thousands, and his salary's sky high—and his manner's just as pleasant as it was in days gone by. It's an idle, trifling story, and you doubtless think it flat, but its moral might be pasted with some profit in your hat.

"We are weary little pilgrims, straying in a world of gloom."

Uncle Walt

Little Pilgrims

WE ARE weary little pilgrims, straying in a world of gloom; just behind us is the cradle, just before us is the tomb; there is nothing much to guide us, or the proper path to mark, as we toddle on our journey, little pilgrims in the dark. And we jostle, and we struggle, in our feeble, futile wrath, always striving, always reaching to push others from the path; and the wrangling and the jangling of our peevish voices rise, to the seraphim that watch us through the starholes in the skies; and they say: "The foolish pilgrims! Watch them as they push and shove! They might have a pleasant ramble, if their hearts were full of love, if they'd help and cheer each other from the hour that they embark—but they're only blind and erring little pilgrims in the dark!"

The Wooden Indian

A POOR OLD Wooden Indian, all battered by the years, was seated on a pile of junk, and shedding briny tears. "What hurts you?" asked the Teddy Bear, "why are you thus distressed? Why do you tear your willow hair, and smite your basswood breast?" "Alas, my occupation's gone," the Indian replied; "cigar men now refuse to keep red warriors outside; I used to stand in pomp and pride before a stogie store; but times have changed, and those glad days will come to me no more. I'm waiting here among the junk in mournful solitude, till some one breaks me into chunks to use for kindling wood." "Cheer up!" exclaimed the Teddy Bear, "don't break your heart, old sport! You yet may have a chance to serve as juryman, in court."

Uncle Walt

Home and Mother

"WHAT IS Home Without a Mother?" There s the motto on the wall, hanging in a place obtrusive, where it may be seen by all; and the question's never answered—we can't know what home would be, if its gentle guardian angel in her place no more we'd see. Mother washes all the dishes and she's sweeping up the floors, while the girls are in the parlor doing Paderewski chores; mother's breaking up some kindling at the woodpile by the gate, while the boys are in the garden with their shovels, digging bait; mother's on her knees a-scrubbing, where the careless footprints are, while the father sits in comfort, toiling at a bad cigar. Mother sits with weary fingers, and with bent and aching head, sewing, darning, for the children while they're all asleep in bed; mother's up before the sunrise, up to labor and to moil, thinking ever of the others, in the weary round of toil. What is home without a mother? That we'll never realize till the light of life has faded from the kind and patient eyes; when the implements of labor fall unheeded from her hand, and the loving voice is silent—then, at last, we'll understand.

Uncle Walt

E. Phillips Oppenheim

I HAVE READ your latest book, Oppenheim; it involves a swarthy crook, Oppenheim; and a maid with languid eyes, and a diplomat who lies, and a dowager who sighs, Oppenheim, Oppenheim, and your glory never dies, Oppenheim. Oh, your formula is great, Oppenheim! Write your novels by the crate, Oppenheim! When we buy your latest book we are sure to find the crook, and the diplomat and dook, Oppenheim, Oppenheim, and the countess and the cook, Oppenheim! You are surely baling hay, Oppenheim, for you write a book a day, Oppenheim; from your fertile brain the rot comes a-pouring, smoking hot, and you use the same old plot, Oppenheim, Oppenheim, but it seems to hit the spot, Oppenheim! You're in all the magazines, Oppenheim; same old figures, same old scenes, Oppenheim; same old counts and diplomats, dime musee aristocrats, same old cozy corner chats, Oppenheim, Oppenheim, and we cry the same old "Rats!" Oppenheim. If you'd only rest a day, Oppenheim! If you'd throw your pen away, Oppenheim! If there'd only come a time when we'd see no yarn or rhyme 'neath the name of Oppenheim, Oppenheim, Oppenheim, it would truly be sublime, Oppenheim!

Better Than Boodle

IF YOU help a busted pilgrim, who's been out of luck a while, if you stake him with a dollar and a stogie and a smile, and you see his haggard features light up with a glow of joy, and you hear him try to murmur that you are a bully boy, then you'll get a lot of pleasure from the life you're leading here; there are better things than boodle in this little whirling sphere. If you write a friendly letter to some fellow far away, who's so weary and so homesick that his hair is turning gray, he will feel a whole lot better, and the cheer-up smile will come, and he'll sail into his duties in a way to make things hum; then you've done a thing to help you when St. Peter calls your name; there are better things than boodle in this little human game. If you see a man a-struggling to regain some ground he's lost, some one who's been up against it, knocked about and tempest tossed, and you turn around and help him to his place with other men, crying shame upon the knockers who would drag him down again, then you've shown that you're a critter of a princely strain of blood; there are better things than boodle on this little ball of mud.

The Famous Four

JOHN AND PETER, and Robert and Paul, what in the world has become of them all? How are they stacking, and where are they gone—Paul and Robert and Peter and John? Paul was a poet, and labored and wrought over his harp, and he kept its strings hot; haunting and sad was his music, though sweet—bards can't be glad when they've nothing to eat. Peter made pictures and painted them well; 'twasn't his fault that they never would sell; 'twasn't his fault that he took a brief ride out to the poorhouse, where later he died. Robert taught school till he died of old age; hard were his labors and scanty his wage; we laid him to rest in a grave on the hill; the county was called on to settle the bill. John was a pitcher, whose curves were immense; he was the pet of the bleachers, and hence he was the owner of riches untold; diamonds and rubies and sapphires and gold. John and Peter and Robert and Paul! Through the long years we've kept cases on all!

Uncle Walt

Niagara

I GAZED upon that mighty flood, that writhed as though in pain or woe, and fell with dull and sick'ning thud, into the chasm far below. If there's a man with soul so dead that he unmoved can view that scene, he surely has a basswood head, and had it carved when it was green. O noble falls! Stupendous sight! Dame Nature's most emphatic fact! The gods were on their job all right when they designed that cataract. All other wonders are a dream, a foolish, feeble phantasy! The pauper falls of Europe seem absurd when they're compared with thee! Had I but seen thee in thy prime, when this proud nation had its dawn, in that fair, distant, golden time, before they strapped thy harness on, then I'd have written thee an ode, to make thy waters pause a while; but go and drag along thy load, since beasts of burden are in style. Alas, that two such handsome falls, that should be kicking up their heels, come forth like horses from their stalls, to turn a million greasy wheels! To grind up glue, make lightning rods, and furnish cheap electric light—no wonder that the nine great gods look down in anger at the sight!

Uncle Walt

A Rainy Night

I HEAR the plashing of the rain upon the roof, upon the pane, it murmurs at the door; it patters forth a futile boast; it whispers like a timid ghost; it streams upon the floor. And as I sit me here alone, and listen to its monotone, strange fancies come and go; I seem to see, distinct and plain dim faces drawn upon the pane, of friends I used to know. Soft voices whisper in the rain, and friends I ne'er shall see again, are crying bitterly; the raindrops seem to be their tears, and o'er the misty void of years, they're calling, calling me. O shadows from a starless shore, begone, and torture me no more, and leave me here alone! I fear the voices in the rain, the voices vibrant with their pain—I fear the spectres that complain, in weary monotone! But still they chide me at the door, and whisper there for evermore, and murmur in their woe; I hear them in the tempest's swell, I hear them sigh, I hear them yell: "Where is that old green umberell, you swiped two years ago?"

Uncle Walt

The Wireless

ERY DAY we read the story of some vessel tempest-tossed, which sends forth a wireless message and otherwise be lost. It would join the y squadrons in the realm beneath the were it not for modern science, which ob the ocean grave. Vainly of such y marvels—all in vain the poet sings! would need another Homer and a with cast-iron strings! We can only pause in wonder, as we read these thrilling tales of the mystic spark that carries news of shipwreck through the gales. We can only take our lids off to the noble master mind that achieved this latest triumph over fog and wave and wind. Yet, to show appreciation, we might buy some shares of stock in the Wireless Corporation office, just around the block. With each share we'll get a picture of a Hero—maybe twins —and, in time, in every parlor there will hang a Johnnie Binns; there will be so many Binnses, coming from the rescued ships, that they'll form a secret order, with its passwords, signs and grips.

Uncle Walt

Helpful Mr. Bok

I OWE so much to Mr. Bok that language fails me when I try about his kindnesses to talk, and briny tears bedim my eye. I owe it to that gifted man that I can take ten yards of string, and decorate a frying pan until it is a beauteous thing. He taught me how to paint a brick and hang it on the parlor wall, which made the blamed room look so slick that callers cry: "It does beat all!" 'Twas Mr. Bok who taught me how to tie pink ribbons on my corns, and when I bought a muley cow, he showed me how to gild her horns. I made a cupboard from a trunk, directed by his kindly charts; a cart-load of hand-painted junk to my poor home a charm imparts. When Arctic stories stirred the soul, his enterprise was just immense; he showed me how to make a pole complete for ninety-seven cents. And when B. Tumbo sailed away, among the roaring beasts to rush, Bok pictured, in his L. H. J., a jungle made of yellow plush. And when I face the tyrant Death, may Bok be with me in the gloom, to decorate my final breath, with tassels and an ostrich plume.

Uncle Walt

Beryl's Boudoir

SHE IS a vain and foolish lass; she stands before her looking-glass, and fusses with her pins and rats, and tries on half a dozen hats, and fixes doodads in her hair, and tints her cheeks, already fair. And when she's fooled three hours away, and she appears, in glad array, she isn't half as nice and neat, she isn't half as slick and sweet as she appeared, four hours ago, when she was wearing calico. If she would take the time she fools away with paints and curling tools, and read some books, of prose or rhyme, she'd get some value for her time. She pads her head outside with rats, machine made hair and monster hats; and gladness might with her abide, if she would pad her head inside. For beauty is a transient thing; the hurried years are on the wing; the dazzling maiden of today will soon be haggard, worn and gray; and in life's winter, when she sits beside her lonely hearth and knits, it will not lessen her despair, to think of rats she used to wear. But if her mind is stored with gold from books the sages wrote of old, with ancient lore or modern song, the days will not seem drear and long; life's twilight will be calm and fair, and loneliness will not be there.

"Honors do not count for much with people underground"

Uncle Walt

Post-Mortem Honors

WHEN you are dead, my weary friend—and some day you must die—the crowds will stand along the curb to see the hearse go by; and at the church the folks will stand and raise a mournful din, and pile a lot of roses on the box that you are in. And people then will shake their heads and say it is a shame, that such a honeybird as you should have to quit the game; and when beneath the sod you rest in your mail order gown, you'll have a big fat monument that's sure to hold you down. But little will it all avail, for you'll be sleeping sound, and honors do not count for much with people underground. You'd rather have some kindness while you tread this vale of tears, than have your dust lamented o'er for fifty million years.

After A While

THE mother, tired, with aching head, from sweeping floors and baking bread, called to her daughter: "Susan, dear, I wish you'd help a little here." Fair Susan, in the parlor dim, was playing o'er a tender hymn; methinks it was "The Maiden's Prayer"—a melody beyond compare. She cried, while playing on, in style: "I'll help you in a little while." Her lover blew in unawares—a fine young man with princely airs. His heart was free from sordid stains; his head was full of high-class brains; most any girl would give her eyes to gather in so big a prize. He heard the mother's weary cry; he heard the damsel's flip reply. His bosom swelled with noble ire! His tawny eyes flashed streaks of fire! He cried: "Miss Susan Sarah Brown, it's up to me to turn you down! While groundhogs live and comets shine, you'll be no blushing bride of mine! The healthy girl who doesn't jump, and on her system get a hump, when mother calls, I do not want; so get thee hence! Aroint! Avaunt! I'll hunt me up a damsel fair who passes up 'The Maiden's Prayer' when she has got a chance to chase the troubles from her mother's face!"

Pretty Good Schemes

IT'S a pretty good scheme to be cheery, and sing as you follow the road, for a good many pilgrims are weary, and hopelessly carry the load; their hearts from the journey are breaking, and a rod seems to them like a mile; and it may be the noise you are making will hearten them up for a while. It's a pretty good scheme in your joking, to cut out the jest that's unkind, for the barbed kind of fun you are poking, some fellow may carry in mind; and a good many hearts have been broken, a good many hearts fond and true, by words that were carelessly spoken by alecky fellows like you. It's a pretty good scheme to be doing some choring around while you can; for the gods with their gifts are pursuing the earnest industrious man; and those gods, in their own El Dorado, are laying up wrath for the one who loafs all the day in the shadow, while others toil, out in the sun.

Uncle Walt

Knowledge By Mail

WHEN I was young and fresh and ruddy, and full of snap and vim, my parents used to make me study until my head would swim. I sat upon the schoolhouse bleachers, with pencil, book and slate, while sundry bald and weary teachers drilled knowledge through my pate. For some quick method I was yearning, some easy path to tread; "there is no royal road to learning," the bald old teachers said; "stick closely to the printed pages, all idleness eschew, and then, perhaps, in future ages, you'll know a thing or two." And when I left the school and college, to climb life's toilsome hill, I found my little store of knowledge would barely fill the bill. But nowadays the world moves quicker than in the long ago; old-fashioned methods make us snicker, they were so crude and slow. By sending seven wooden dollars to Messrs. Freaks and Freaks, they'll make our children finished scholars, and do it in three weeks. So let us close the schools and leave 'em to ruin and decay, and take the books and maps and heave 'em a million miles away; for now the kids take erudition in three-grain capsule form; the teacher loses the position that he so long kept warm.

Uncle Walt

Duke and Plumber

SAMANTHA Arabella Luke has gone abroad and caught a duke—a nobleman of gilded ease, who has a standard blood disease. She'll build again his stately halls, and pay for papering the walls; she'll straighten up his park and grounds, and buy him nags to ride to hounds; she'll tear the checks from out her book, to pay the butler and the cook, whose wages have been in arrears for maybe twenty-seven years. In fifty ways she'll spend the scads, the good old rocks that were her dad's; and all the nobles in the land will greet her with the arctic hand, and snub her in her husband's lair, and pass her up with stony stare. And ere a year has run its course, the duke will hustle for divorce, and Arabella's tears will drop upon the marble floors, kerflop! Samantha's cousin, Mary Ann, has hooked up with the plumber man, a gent of industry and peace, whose face is often black with grease. They dwell together in a cot surrounded by a garden plot, and there she raises beans and tripe, while he is fixing valve and pipe. He takes his money, like a man, and hands it o'er to Mary Ann, and she is salting down his wage where it will help them in old age. O reader, who has made a fluke? Samantha with her pallid duke, or fat and sassy Mary Ann, who gathered in the plumber man?

Uncle Walt

Human Hands

THERE'S the man whose hand is clammy as a fish that lately died, and to grasp it sends a shudder percolating through your hide, and you feel its cold impression in your muscles and your glands, and you wish he'd wear an oven on his blamed antarctic hands. There's the man with hands so horny that they feel like chunks of slate, and when he is shaking with you, you can feel them grind and grate; and he nearly breaks your fingers, and you mutter through your hat: "I would run them through a smelter if my hands were hard as that!" There's the man whose hands are always pawing, pawing while he talks; they are fussing with your whiskers, they are reaching for your socks; they are patting on your bosom, they are clawing on your arm, and you'd like to meet their owner on the Mrs. Gunness farm. There's the man whose hands are always sliding down into his jeans, to relieve some broken pilgrims of their miseries and pains; and such hands, that in their giving, never falter, never tire, in the golden time a-coming will be twanging at a lyre!

Uncle Walt

The Lost Pipe

UPON THE joyous New Year's day I threw my briar pipe away. I said, with conscious rectitude: "The smoking habit's base and lewd; it taints the breath and soils the teeth, and often stains the chin beneath; the smoker's tongue is badly seared, and he has clinkers in his beard; of nicotine he is so full no self-respecting cannibull would eat him raw, well done or rare; and e'en his neckties and his hair, his hat, his breath, and trouserloons, suggest plug-cut and cuspitoons. And so I throw my pipe away, upon this gladsome New Year's day; my friends no more will have to choke and wheeze in my tobacco smoke." Since then the days drag slowly on; it seems as though ten years have gone; I walk the floor the long night through, and, jealous, watch the kitchen flue—for it can smoke and hold carouse, and not bust forty-seven vows; the cookstove makes my vitals gripe, for it can use its trusty pipe. Thus far I've kept the vow I swore, but do not tempt me any more; don't talk of cabbage on the place, or flaunt alfalfa in my face!

Uncle Walt

Thanks-giving

THIS ONE DAY let us forget all the little things that fret, all the little griefs and cares which are bringing us gray hairs; let's forget the evil thought, and the ill that others wrought; thinking only of the hand that has led us through a land smiling with a richer store than fair Canaan knew of yore. Let's forget to jeer and rail at the men who fight and fail; let's forget to criticise motes within our neighbors' eyes; thinking only of the hand that has led us through a land where the toiler gets reward; where no grasping overlord harries men with lash or chain, robbing them of brawn and brain. Let's forget malicious things; better is the heart that sings than the one that harbors hate, which is aye a killing weight. Let's forget the scowling brow; it's the time for gladness now! It's the time for well-stuffed birds, kindly smiles and cheerful words; it's a time to try to rise somewhat nearer to the skies, thinking only of a hand that will lead us to a land in the distances above, where the countersign is love.

Uncle Walt

Sir Walter Raleigh

SIR WALTER Raleigh sat in jail, removed from strife and flurry; the light was dim, his bread was stale, and yet he didn't worry. He knew the headsman, grim and dour, with sleeves uprolled and frock off, might come to him at any hour, and cut his blooming block off. He knew that he would evermore with dismal chains be laden, till he had traveled through the door that opens into Aidenn. To have his name wiped off the map King James was in a hurry; and yet—he was a dauntless chap!—he still refused to worry. Serenely he pursued his work, and wrote his lustrous pages, serenely as a smiling clerk who writes for weekly wages. And when the headsman came and said: "I hate the job, Sir Walter, but I must ask you for your head," the great man did not falter. "Gadzooks," quoth he, "and eke odsfish! Thou art a courteous shaver! Take off my head! I only wish I might return the favor!" And so the headsman swung the axe, beneath the sky of Surrey; Sir Walter died beneath his whacks, but still refused to worry!

The Country Editor

"O COME," I said, to the Printer Man, who edits the Weekly Swish, "a rest will do you a lot of good—so come to the creek and fish." "If you'll wait a while," said the Printer Man, "I'll toddle along, I think; but first I must write up some local dope, and open a can of ink, and carry in coal for the office stove, and mix up a lot of paste, and clean the grease from the printing press with a bushel of cotton waste, and set up an ad for the auctioneer, and throw in a lot of type, and hunt up a plumber and have him see what's clogging the waterpipe, and call on the doctor to have him soak the swellings upon my head, for I had it punched but an hour ago, for something the paper said—" "I fear," I said to the Printer Man, "if I wait till your chore list fails, the minnows that frolic along the creek will all be as large as whales!"

Uncle Walt

Useless Griefs

A HUNDRED years ago and more, men wrung their hands, and walked the floor, and worried over this or that, and thought their cares would squash them flat. Where are those worried beings now? The bearded goat and festive cow eat grass above their mouldered bones, and jay birds call, in strident tones. And where the ills they worried o'er? Forgotten all, for ever more. Gone all the sorrow and the woe, that lived a hundred years ago! The grief that makes you scream today, like other griefs, will pass away; and when you've cashed your little string, and jay birds o'er your bosom sing, the stranger pausing there to view the marble works that cover you, will think upon the uselessness of human worry and distress. So let the worry business slide; live while you live, and when you've died, the folks will say, around your bier: "He made a hit while he was here!"

Uncle Walt

Fairbanks' Whiskers

WELL MAY a startled nation mourn, with wailings greet the dawn, for Charlie's whiskers have been shorn—another landmark gone! No more, no more will robins nest within their lilac shade, for they are folded now and pressed, and with the mothballs laid. The zephyrs that have sobbed and sighed athwart that hangdown bunch, through other whiskers now must glide; they'll doubtless take the hunch. Vain world! This life's an empty boast, and gods have feet of clay; the things we love and honor most, are first to pass away. The world seems new at every dawn, seems new and queer, and strange; and we can scarce keep tab upon the ringing grooves of change. The changing sea, the changing land, are speaking of decay; "but Charlie's whiskers still will stand," we used to fondly say; "long may they dodge the glinting shears, and shining snickersnees, and may they brave a thousand years, the battle and the breeze! With Charlie's whiskers in the van, we'll fight and conquer yet, and show the world that there's one man, who's not a suffragette!" Vain dreams! Vain hopes! We now repine, and snort, and sweat, and swear; for Charlie's sluggers are in brine, and Charlie's chin is bare.

Uncle Walt

Letting It Alone

HE USED to take a flowing bowl perhaps three times a day; he needed it to brace his nerves, or drive the blues away, but as for chaps who drank too much, they simply made him tired; "a drink," he said, "when feeling tough, is much to be desired; some men will never quit the game while they can raise a bone, but I can drink the old red booze, or let the stuff alone." He toddled on the downward path, and seedy grew his clothes, and like a beacon in the night flamed forth his bulbous nose; he lived on slaw and sweitzer cheese, the free lunch brand of fruits, and when he sought his downy couch he always wore his boots; "some day I'll cut it out," he said; "my will is still my own, and I can hit the old red booze, or let the stuff alone." One night a prison surgeon sat by this poor pilgrim's side, and told him that his time had come to cross the great divide. "I've known you since you were a lad," the stern physician said, "and I have watched you as you tried to paint the whole world red, and if you wish, I'll have engraved upon your churchyard stone: 'He, dying, proved that he could let the old red booze alone.' "

End of The Road

SOME DAY this heart will cease to beat; some day these worn and weary feet will tread the road no more; some day this hand will drop the pen, and never never write again those rhymes which are a bore. And sometimes, when the stars swing low, and mystic breezes come and go, with music in their breath, I think of Destiny and Fate, and try to calmly contemplate this bogie men call Death. Such thinking does not raise my hair; my cheerful heart declines to scare or thump against my vest; for Death, when all is said and done, is but the dusk, at set of sun, the interval of rest. But lines of sorrow mark my brow when I consider that my frau, when I have ceased to wink, will have to face a crowd of gents who're selling cheap tin monuments, and headstones made of zinc. And crayon portrait sharks will come, and make the house with language hum, and ply their deadly game; they will enlarge my photograph, attach a hand-made epitaph, and put it in a frame. They'll hang that horror on the wall, and then, when neighbors come to call, they'll view my crayon head, and wipe sad tears from either eye, and lean against the chairs, and cry: "How fortunate he's dead!"

The Dying Fisherman

ONCE A fisherman was dying in his humble, lowly cot, and the pastor sat beside him saying things that hit the spot, so that all his futile terrors left the dying sinner's heart, and he said: "The journey's lonely, but I'm ready for the start. There is just one little matter that is fretting me," he sighed, "and perhaps I'd better tell it ere I cross the Great Divide. I have got a string of stories that I've told from day to day; stories of the fish I've captured, and the ones that got away, and I fear that when I tell them they are apt to stretch a mile; and I wonder when I'm wafted to that land that's free from guile, if they'll let me tell my stories if I try to tell them straight, or will angels lose their tempers then, and chase me through the gate?" Then the pastor sat and pondered, for the question vexed him sore; never such a weird conundrum had been sprung on him before. Yet the courage of conviction moved him soon to a reply, and he wished to fill the fisher with fair visions of the sky: "You can doubtless tell fish stories," said the clergyman, aloud, "but I'd stretch them very little if old Jonah's in the crowd."

Uncle Walt

George Meredith

HE WROTE good books, and wrote in vain, and writing, wore out heart and brain. The few would buy his latest tome, and, filled with gladness, take it home, and read it through, from end to end, and lend it to some high-browed friend. The few would say it was a shame that George was scarcely in the game; that grocers, butlers, clerks and cooks would never read his helpful books, but blew themselves for "Deadwood Dick," and "Howling Hank from Bitter Creek," "The Bandit That Nick Carter Caught," and Laura Libbey's tommyrot. Alas! It is a bitter thing! We'd rather have a Zenda king, or hold, with Sinclair, coarse carouse, in some Chicago packing house, or wade, with Weyman, to our knees, in yarns of swords and snickersnees, or trek with Haggard to the veldt, where Zulus seek each other's pelt, than buy a volume, learned and deep, and o'er it yawn ourselves to sleep!

Uncle Walt

The Smart Children

THE OTHER night I took a walk, and called on Jinx, across the block. The home of Jinx was full of boys and girls and forty kinds of noise. Dad Jinx was good, and kind, and straight; he let the children go their gait; he never spoke a sentence cross, he never showed that he was boss, and so his home, as neighbors know, was like the Ringling wild beast show. We tried to talk about the crops; the children raised their fiendish yawps; they hunted up a Thomas cat, and placed it in my stovepipe hat; they jarred me with a carpet tack, and poured ice water down my back; my long coat tails they set afire, and this aroused my slumb'ring ire. I rose, majestic in my wrath, and through those children moved a path, I [redacted] sorely, hip a[redacted]high, and piled [redacted] the woodshed high; I threw their father in the well, and fired his cottage, with a yell. Some rigid moralists, I hear, have said my course was too severe, but their rebukes can not affright—my conscience tells me I was right.

"A little resting in the shadow, a struggle to the height, a futile search for El Dorado, and then we say good night."

Uncle Walt

The Journey

A LITTLE work, a little sweating, a few brief, flying years; a little joy, a little fretting, some smiles and then some tears; a little resting in the shadow, a struggle to the height, a futile search for El Dorado, and then we say Good Night. Some moiling in the strife and clangor, some years of doubt and debt, some words we spoke in foolish anger that we would fain forget; some cheery words we said unthinking, that made a sad heart light; the banquet, with its feast and drinking—and then we say Good Night. Some questioning of creeds and theories, and judgment of the dead, while God, who never sleeps or wearies, is watching overhead; some little laughing and some sighing, some sorrow, some delight; a little music for the dying, and then we say Good Night.

Times Have Changed

THE MAIDEN lingered in her bower, within her father's stately tower—it was four hundred years ago—her lover came, o'er cliff and scar, and twanged the strings of his guitar, and sang his love songs, soft and low. He said her breath was like the breeze that wandered over flowery leas, her cheeks were lovely as the rose; her eyes were stars, from heaven torn, and she was guiltless of a corn upon her sweet angelic toes. For hours and hours his songs were sung, until a puncture spoiled a lung, and then of course he had to quit; but Arabella from her room would shoot a smile that lit the gloom, and gave him a conniption fit. Then homeward would the lover hie, as happy as an August fly upon a bald man's shining head; and Arabella's heart would swell with happiness too great to tell; ah me, those good old times are dead! Just let a modern lover scheme to win the damsel of his dream by punching tunes from his guitar! In silver tones she'd jeer and scoff; she'd call to him: "Come off! come off! where is your blooming motor car?

Uncle Walt

My Little Dog

MY LITTLE DOG DOT is a sassy pup, and I scold him in savage tones, for he keeps the garden all littered up with feathers and rags and bones. He drags dead cats for a half a mile, and sometimes a long-dead hen; and when I have carted away the pile, he builds it all up again. He howls for hours at the beaming moon, and thinks it a Melba chore; and neighbors who list to his throbbing tune, rear up in the air and roar. And often I hand down this stern decree: "This critter will have to die." And he puts his paws on my old fat knee, and turns up a loving eye; and he wags his tail, and he seems to say: "You're almost too fat to walk, and your knees are sprung and your whiskers gray, and your picture would stop a clock; some other doggies might turn you down—some dogs that are proud and grand, but you are the best old boss in town; I love you to beat the band!" And he bats his eye and he wags his tail, conveying this kindly thought; and I'd rather live out my days in jail, than injure that derned dog Dot!

Uncle Walt

Harry Thurston Peck

HE'S SO FAMILIAR with the great, this Harry Thurston Peck, that every man of high estate has wept upon his neck. The poet Browning pondered deep the things that Harry said; Lord Tennyson was wont to sleep in Harry's cattle-shed. When Ibsen wrote, he wildly cried: "My life will be a wreck, if this, my drama, is denied, the praise of Thurston Peck!" Said Kipling, in his better days: "What use is my renown, since Harry scans my blooming lays, and blights them with a frown?" The poet, when his end draws near, cries: "Death brings no alarms, if I, in that grim hour of fear, may die in Harry's arms." And, being dead, his spirit knows no shade of doubt or gloom, if Harry plants a little rose upon his humble tomb. Poor Shakespeare and those elder bards, who haunt the blessed isles, were born too soon for such rewards as Harry Thurston's smiles. But joy will lighten their despair, and flood the realms of space, for Harry Peck will join them there—they'll see him face to face!

Uncle Walt

Tired Man's Sleep

NOW THE LONG, long day is fading, and the hush of dusk is here, and the stars begin parading, each one in its distant sphere; and the city's strident voices dwindle to a gentle hum, and the heart of man rejoices that the hour of rest has come. Thrown away is labor's fetter, when the day has reached its close; nothing in the world is better than a weary man's repose. Nothing in the world is sweeter than the sleep the toiler finds, while the ravening moskeeter fusses at the window blinds. Nothing 'neath the moon can wake him, short of cannon cracker's roar; if you'd rouse him you must shake him till you dump him on the floor. Idle people seek their couches, seek their beds to toss and weep, for a demon on them crouches, driving from their eyes the sleep. And the weary hours they number, and they cry, in tones distraught: "For a little wad of slumber, I would give a house and lot!" When the long, long day is dying, and you watch the twinkling stars, knowing that you'll soon be lying, sleeping like a train of cars, be, then, thankful, without measure; be as thankful as you can; you have nailed as great a treasure as the gods have given man!

Tomorrow

"TOMORROW," said the languid man, I'll have my life insured, I guess; I know it is the safest plan, to save my children from distress." And when the morrow came around, they placed him gently in a box; at break of morning he was found as dead as Julius Caesar's ox. His widow now is scrubbing floors, and washing shirts, and splitting wood, and doing fifty other chores, that she may rear her wailing brood. "Tomorrow," said the careless jay, "I'll take an hour, and make my will; and then if I should pass away, the wife and kids will know no ill." The morrow came, serene and nice, the weather mild, with signs of rain; the careless jay was placed on ice, embalming fluid in his brain. Alas, alas, poor careless jay! The lawyers got his pile of cash; his wife is toiling night and day, to keep the kids in clothes and hash. Tomorrow is the ambushed walk avoided by the circumspect. Tomorrow is the fatal rock on which a million ships are wrecked.

Uncle Walt

Toothache

NOW MY WEARY heart is breaking, for my left hand tooth is aching, with a harsh, persistent rumble that is keeping folks awake; hollowed out by long erosion, it, with spasm and explosion, seems resolved to show the public how a dog-gone tooth can ache. Now it's quivering or quaking; now it's doing fancy aching, then it shoots some Roman candles which go whizzing through my brain; now it does some lofty tumbling, then again it's merely grumbling; and anon it's showing samples of spring novelties in pain. All the time my woe increases; I have kicked a chair to pieces, but it didn't seem to soothe me or to bring my soul relief; I have stormed around the shanty till my wife and maiden auntie said they'd pull their freight and leave me full enjoyment of my grief. I have made myself so pleasant that I'm quarantined at present, and the neighbors say they'll shoot me if I venture from my door; now a voice cries: "If thou'd wentest in the first place, to a dentist—" it is strange that inspiration never came to me before!

Auf Wiedersehen

"FAREWELL," I said,to the friend I loved, and my eyes were filled with tears; "I know you'll come to my heart again, in a few brief, hurried years!" Ah, many come up the garden path, and knock at my cottage door, but the friend I loved when my heart was young, comes back to that heart no more. "Farewell!" I cried to the gentle bird, whose music had filled the dawn; "you fly away, but you'll sing again, when the winter's snows are gone." Ah, the bright birds sway on the apple-boughs, and sing as they sang before; but the bird I loved, with the golden voice, shall sing to my heart no more! "Farewell!" I said to the Thomas Cat, I threw in the gurgling creek, all weighted down with a smoothing iron, and a hundredweight of brick. "You'll not come back, if I know myself, from the silent, sunless shore!" Then I journeyed home, and that blamed old cat was there by the kitchen door!

Uncle Walt

After The Game

WHEN I CASH in, and this poor race is run, my chores performed, and all my errands done, I know that folks who mock my efforts here, will weeping bend above my lowly bier, and bring large garlands, worth three bucks a throw, and paw the ground in ecstasy of woe. And friends will wear crape bow-knots on their tiles, while I look down (or up) a million miles, and wonder why those people never knew how smooth I was until my spirit flew. When I cash in I will not care a yen for all the praise that's heaped upon me then; serene and silent, in my handsome box, I shall not heed the laudatory talks, and all the pomp and all the vain display, will just be pomp and feathers thrown away. So tell me now, while I am on the earth, your estimate of my surprising worth; O tell me what a looloo-bird I am, and fill me full of taffy and of jam!

Uncle Walt

Nero's Fiddle

WE HAVE often roasted Nero that he played the violin, while his native Rome was burning and the firemen raised a din; there he sat and played "Bedelia," heedless of the fiery storm, while the fire chief pranced and sweated in his neat red uniform. And I often think that Nero had a pretty level head; would the fire have been extinguished had he fussed around instead? Would the fire insurance folks have loosened up a shekel more, had old Nero squirted water on some grocer's cellar door? When there comes a big disaster, people straightway lose their wits; they go round with hands a-wringing, sweating blood and throwing fits; but the wise man sits and fiddles, plays a tune from end to end, for it never pays to worry over things you cannot mend. It is good to offer battle when catastrophes advance, it is well to keep on scrapping while a fellow has a chance; but when failure is as certain as the coming of the dusk, then it's wise to take your fiddle and fall back on "Money Musk."

Uncle Walt

The Real Terror

IF YOU should chance to mention Death, most men will have a grouch; and yet to die is nothing more than going to your couch, when you have done your little stunt, performed the evening chores, wound up the clock, blown out the light, and put the cat outdoors. The good old world jogged smoothly on before you had your fling; and it will jog as smoothly on when you have cashed your string. King Death himself is good and kind; he always does his best to soothe the heart that's sorrowful, and give the weary rest; but there are evils in his train that daunt the stoutest soul, and one of them may serve to end this cheerful rigmarole. I always have a haunting dread that when I come to die, the papers of the town will tell how some insurance guy, paid up the money that was due to weeping kin of mine, before the funeral procesh had fallen out of line; and thus they'll use me for an ad, some Old Line Life to boom, before I've had a chance to get acquainted with my tomb!

The Talksmiths

IN THE HOUR of stress, when the outlook's blue, and the nation's in a box, there's always a statesman, strong and true, who comes to the front and talks. If wind would banish the ills we see, and drive all our troubles hence, then the talksmith's tongue would our bulwark be, and his larynx our chief defense. We groan and sweat at the forge and mill, to see that our tax is paid, and the money all goes to pay the bill for the noise in congress made. Wherever you go the talksmith stands, with his winning smile and smirk, and busts the welkin and waves his hands—but doesn't get down to work. Ah, well, my friends, we shall scrape and peck along till the judgment day, when the talksmith climbs on the old world's wreck, and talks till he burns away!

Uncle Walt

Woman's Progress

IT IS WOMAN'S firm ambition to attain a high position, and he surely is a caitiff who regrets to see her rise; I for one will hand her praises, load her down with cheering phrases, if, in seeking higher levels, she does not neglect the pies. Let her study art and science, read up Blackstone and his clients, soak herself in Kant or Browning and the truth that in them lies; she may dote on Keats or Ruddy—if she doesn't cease to study worthy books and able pamphlets treating of uplifting pies. Now and then my spirit, shrinking, gets to doubting, brooding, thinking that the pies we have at present are not like the pies of yore; modern dames are good at making crusts for pies, and good at baking, but they buy the stuff to fill them at the nearest grocer's store. Are our pies as good as ever? Do our modern dames endeavor to produce the pie triumphant, pies that make us better men? If they do, then who would chide them, who would blame them or deride them, if they turn from pies and cookies to their Ibsen books again?

"I saw the form of a cringing bum all crumpled and soaked with gin."

Uncle Walt

The Magic Mirror

I WENT one night with my high-priced thirst to loaf in the booze bazar, and as I sampled the old red dope I leaned on the handsome bar. My purse was full of the good long green, and my raiment was smooth and new, and I looked as slick as a cabbage rose that's kissed by the nice wet dew. Behind the bottles a mirror stood, as large as your parlor floor, and I looked and looked in the shining glass, and wondered, and looked some more. My own reflection did not appear, but there where it should have been, I saw the form of a cringing bum all crumpled and soaked with gin. His nose was red and his eyes were dim, unshorn was his swollen face, and I thought it queer such a seedy bo would come to so smooth a place. I turned around for a better look at this effigy of despair, and nearly fell in a little heap, for the effigy wasn't there! The barkeep laughed. "It's the Magic Glass," he said, with a careless yawn; "it shows a man how he's apt to look years hence when his roll is gone!"

Uncle Walt

The Misfit Face

A CERTAIN man, who lived some place, was gifted with a misfit face; when Nature built his mug she broke all rules and tried to play a joke; of pale red hair he had a thatch, his eyes were green and didn't match; his nose was pug, his chin was weak, and freckles grew on either cheek, and sorrel whiskers fringed his chop, too thin to ever make a crop. And people, when they first beheld his countenance, just stopped and yelled. But when they'd known him for a while, and marked his glad and genial smile; when passing time had made them wise to all the kindness in those eyes; and when they found that from his face there came no sayings mean or base, that misfit mug they'd often scan, and cry: "He is a handsome man!"

Uncle Walt

A Dog Story

A LARGE black dog, of stately mien, was walking o'er the village green, on some important errand bent; a little cur, not worth a cent, observed him passing by, and growled, and barked a while, and yapped, and howled. The big one did not deign a look, but walked along, like prince or dook. The cur remarked, beneath its breath: "That big four-flusher's scared to death! Those great big brutes are never game; now just watch Fido climb his frame!" The big black dog went stalking on, as calm and tranquil as the dawn; he knew the cur was at his heels; he heard its yaps and snarls and squeals, and yet he never looked around, or blinked an eye, or made a sound; his meditations had a tone that mangy pups have never known. The cur, unnoticed, lost all fear; it grabbed the big dog by the ear; the latter paused just long enough to take the small one by the scruff, and shake him gently to and fro; and then he let poor Fido go, and said, in quiet tones: "Now get!" And Fido's doubtless running yet. Suppose you see if you can nail the moral hidden in this tale.

Uncle Walt

The Pitcher

I'D LIKE to be a Pitcher, and on the Diamond stand, a cap upon my Forehead, a Ball within my Hand. Before Applauding Thousands, I'd throw the Curving Sphere, and From the eyes of Batsmen, bring forth the Briny Tear. I'd make my Occupation a thing of Pomp and Dread, I'd tie Myself in Bow-Knots, and stand upon my Head; a string of wild Contortions would mark my Every Throw, and all the Fans would Murmur: "Oh, Girls, ain't he a Jo?" And when I left the Diamond, on Rest or Pleasure bent, the Kids would trail behind me, and Worship as they went; and all the Sporty Grownups would say: "He's Warm Enough!" and fair and Cultured Ladies would cry: "He is the Stuff!" I'd like to be a Pitcher, while I Remain Below; by day to Gather Garlands, by night to Count the Dough.

Lions and Ants

ONCE A HUNTER met a lion near the hungry critter's lair, and the way that lion mauled him was decidedly unfair; but the hunter never whimpered when the surgeons, with their thread, sewed up forty-seven gashes in his mutilated head; and he showed the scars in triumph, and they gave him pleasant fame, and he always blessed the lion that had camped upon his frame. Once that hunter, absent-minded, sat upon a hill of ants, and about a million bit him, and you should have seen him dance! And he used up lots of language of a deep magenta tint, and apostrophized the insects in a style unfit to print. And it's thus with wordly troubles; when the big ones come along, we serenely go to meet them, feeling valiant, bold and strong, but the weary little worries with their poisoned stings and smarts, put the lid upon our courage, make us gray, and break our hearts.

The Nameless Dead

WE ONLY know they fought and died, and o'er their graves the wind has sighed, for many a long, slow-footed year; and winter's snow has drifted here; and in the dawning warmth of spring the joyous birds came here to sing; we only know that rest is sweet to weary hearts and toiling feet, and they who sleep beneath the sod gave all they had to give to God. And in the radiance of the Throne, their names are known—their names are known! We know not from what homes they came; we can but guess their dreams of fame; but lamps for them did vainly burn, and mothers waited their return, and listened, at some cottage door, for steps that sounded never more; and loving eyes grew dim with tears, and hearts grew old with grief of years. And here they sleep, as they have slept, since legions o'er the country swept; where mothers wait before the Throne, their names are known—their names are known!

Uncle Walt

Ambition

WHEN I HEAR a noble singer reeling off entrancing noise, then I bend in admiration, and his music never cloys. And I feel a high ambition as a singer to excel, and I put my voice in training, and I prance around and yell; oh, I dish up trills and warbles, and I think, throughout the day, that I'll have Caruso faded ere a month has rolled away. Then the neighbors come and see me, and they give me stern reproof, saying I am worse than forty yellow cats upon the roof. When I see a splendid painting it appeals to brain and heart, and I blow myself for brushes and decide to follow Art. With a can of yellow ochre and a jug of turpentine, I produce some masterpieces that would make old Rubens pine, and I talk about Perspective and the whatness of the whence, till a neighbor comes and asks me what I'll take to paint his fence. When I read a rattling volume I invest in pens and ink, and prepare to write some chapters that will make the nation think; and I rear some Vandyke whiskers and neglect to cut my hair, and I read up Bulwer Lytton for some good old oaths to swear; when I get the proper bearing, and the literary style, then I'm asked to write a pamphlet booming some one's castor ile!

Uncle Walt

Night's Illusions

AT NIGHT you seek your downy bed, and ere you sink to sleep and dreams, that strange machine you call your head is full of weird and wondrous schemes; they seem too grand and great to fail; they'll fill your treasury with dough; but morning shows them flat and stale—I often wonder why 'tis so. At eve you are a blithesome soul, your future is the one good bet; you gaily quaff the flowing bowl, or dance the stately minuet; your joy's obtrusive and intense; but morning finds you full of woe; you'd sell yourself for twenty cents—I often wonder why 'tis so. At night you walk beneath the stars, and high ambitions fill your soul; you'll batter down opposing bars, and fight your way, and win the goal; but morning passes you the ice, your visions fade, your spirit's low; you spend the long day shaking dice—I often wonder why 'tis so. At night you think of things sublime, and inspiration fills your heart; you think you'll write a deathless rhyme, or cut a swath in realms of art; but morning finds you looking sick; you feel you haven't any show; you dig some bait and seek the creek—I often wonder why 'tis so.

Before and After

BEFORE THE FIGHT the bruiser said: "I'll surely kill that aleck dead! He thinks he has a chance with me! His gall is beautiful to see. His friends are betting quite a stack, and say that I cannot come back. I'm better now, I say right here, than ever in my great career; I'm sound and good in wind and limb, and I will put the lid on him. Just take it from me, take it straight; I'm fit to lick a hundredweight of wildcats, wolves or rattlesnakes; I'll whip him in a brace of shakes!" The fight was o'er; the bruiser sat, his head too large to fit his hat, his eyes bunged up, his teeth knocked in; he muttered, with a swollen grin: "Well, yes, he licked me, that blamed ape! But I was badly out of shape; I didn't train the way I should; my knees were stiff, my wind no good; I had lumbago and the gout—no wonder that he knocked me out! But just you wait ten years or more! I'm after that four-flusher's gore! When I have rested for a spell, and when my face is good and well, I'll spring a challenge good and hard, and whip him in his own back yard!"

Luther Burbank

THE WIZARD of the garden, the scientist who found a way to raise a peartree with branches underground, who gave us boneless pumpkins and non-explosive peas, and gutta-percha lettuce, and beets that grow on trees—this wizard of the garden, with venom is assailed, by lesser lights of science, who tried his stunts and failed. And thus it was forever, and thus 'twill always be; the man who wins must suffer the shafts of calumny. We're mostly small potatoes, we critters here on earth; we kick at big achievements, we snarl at sterling worth; we view the greater triumphs of industry and art, and if we find no blemish, it nearly breaks our heart. Go on, O Luther Burbank, the Wizard of the West! Heed not the hoots of people by jealousy oppressed; send forth your sea-green roses, to scent a thousand Junes, produce your horseless radish, and double action prunes!

Uncle Walt

Governed Too Much

I LOVE the sun and the gentle breeze, and the brook that winds through the pleasant vale; and I love the birds, and I love the trees, and I'm always glad when I'm out of jail. We are governed now by so many laws that liberty's dead, and we've heard its knell, and the wise man carries a set of saws, to cut his way from a prison cell. The grocer wails in a dungeon deep, for he sold an egg that was out of date; the baker's fetters won't let him sleep, a loaf of his bread was under weight. The butcher beats at his prison door, and fills the air with his doleful moan; they'll cut off his head when the night is o'er, for he sold a steak that was mostly bone. The milkman's there in the prison yard, and the jailers flog him and make him jump; it seems to me that his fate is hard, though he did draw milk from the old home pump. A sickly weed, that was lank and thin, embellished my lot, at the edge of town, and the peelers nabbed me and ran me in, because I neglected to cut it down. I dropped a can as I crossed the park, and that is a crime that's against the law; so they shut me up in a dungeon dark, with its rusty chains and its moldy straw. I love the brook and the summer breeze, and I'm rather mashed on the howling gale; and I'm fond of robins and bumblebees, and I'm always glad when I'm out of jail.

Uncle Walt

Success In Life

THE HERO of this simple tale was born of parents beastly poor; they toiled and wrought without avail to scrape a living from the moor. Our hero early made resolve that he would strive for greater heights; "let others in these ruts revolve, and carry on their puny fights; to gather wealth, to live in state, is all that makes this life worth while; and when I'm grown I'll pull my freight, and try to raise a mighty pile." His dreams came true, in every way, as visions came, in days of old; he took no time for rest or play, but gathered in fat, yellow gold. By steady steps our hero rose, to heights of usefulness and fame; he put the kibosh on his foes, and held the ace in every game. He laughed at figtrees and at vines, and all domestic, trifling things; he owned some railways and some mines, and was among the copper kings. But why detail his glories so? Why should we try to count his dimes? It is enough for us to know he's been indicted twenty times.

Uncle Walt

The Hookworm Victim

HE WAS a mournful looking wreck, with yellow face and scrawny neck, and weary eyes that looked as though they had monopoly of woe. Too tired to get his labors done, all day he loitered in the sun, and filled the air with yawns and moans, while people called him Lazybones. One day the doctor came, and said: "Brace up, my friend! Hold up your head! The hookworm, deadly as an asp, has got you in its loathsome grasp! But I will break the hookworm lose, and cook its everlasting goose! Swing wide your mouth, and do not cringe—" and then he took his big syringe, and shot about a quart of dope, that tasted like a bar of soap, adown the patient's yawning throat—"I guess I got that hookworm's goat!" One gasping breath the patient drew, and bit a lightning rod in two, and vaulted o'er his cottage roof; and then, on nimble, joyous hoof, he sped across the windswept plain, and burned a school, and robbed a train. The doctor watched his patient streak across the landscape, sere and bleak, and said: "It makes my bosom warm! What wonders Science can perform!"

Uncle Walt

Alfred Austin

O ALFRED, of the withered bays and harp of nice clean celluloid, why do you spend the passing days in singing of an aching void? Why sing a roundelay that means no more than Choctaw to a Turk? Is it because the magazines will pay you kopecks for your work? O Alfred, of the bloodless ryhme, that savors more of milk than fire, bethink you of the olden time when poets really smote the lyre, producing strains of noble swell, that touched and stirred the hearts of all, and made the soulful people yell, and bat their heads against the wall! We listen to the songs you croon among the fogs across the sea; your poor old harp is out of tune, its strings were made in Germany. Far better poets roam the hills of this fair land, and feed on hope and write wild songs of liver pills, or Jimson's Non-Explosive Soap.

Uncle Walt

Weary Old Age

IT WAS a bent and ancient man who toiled with spade and pick, and down his haggard features ran the sweat-drops, rolling thick. And, as he toiled, his gasping sighs spoke darkly of despair; a hopeless look was in his eyes, a look of grief and care. He toiled, all heedless of the crowd that journeyed to and fro; "it is a shame," I said, aloud, "that Age should suffer so." He overheard me, and he said: "I earned this fate, in truth; when young I stained the landscape red; I was a Gilded Youth. I bought the merchandise that's wet, I fooled with games of chance; and now, in misery and sweat, I wear the name of Pance. I was a rounder and a sport, a spender and a blood, and now, when I loom up in court, my only name is Mud. I filled my years with gorgeous breaks, I thought my life a game; I threw my money to the drakes, and wallowed deep in shame. I used to hate the sissy-boys, those molly-coddle lads, who were content with milder joys, and salted down the scads; and now I see them passing by, in opulence and ease, while I, too luckless e'en to die, am doing tasks like these. Sometimes, in racking dreams I see the money that I burned; but do not waste your tears on me—I'm getting what I earned!"

Lullaby

DARLING, HUSH! your tears are welling from your azure angel eyes, but you'll do no good by yelling; hush, my baby, dear, be wise! I would give the soothing syrup that you want, to quell this storm, but I fear that it would stir up trouble in your darling form. Once I prized that syrup highly, thinking it was just the stuff, but I wrote to Dr. Wiley, and he says it's bad enough. Once the doctor, also, prized it, but he found, O baby fair, after he had analyzed it, that an ounce would kill a bear. It's supposed to cure the colic, and to check the infant spleen, but it's strongly alcoholic, and contains some Paris green; it has killed a frightful number, and will kill a legion more; sleep, my darling, sleep and slumber, while your daddy walks the floor!

The Schoolmarm

THE TEACHER in the country school, expounding lesson, sum and rule, and teaching children how to rise to heights where lasting honor lies, deserves a fat and handsome wage, for she's a triumph of this age. No better work than hers is done beneath the good old shining sun; she builds the future of the state; she guides the youths who will be great; she gives the childish spirit wings, and points the way to noble things. And we, who do all things so well, and of our "institooshuns" yell, reward the teacher with a roll that brings a shudder to her soul. We have our coin done up in crates, and gladly hand it to the skates who fuss around in politics and fool us with their time-worn tricks. In Congress one cheap common jay will loaf a week, and draw more pay than some tired teacher, toiling near, will ever see in half a year. If I was running this old land, I'd have a lot of statesmen canned; and congressmen, and folks like those, would have to work for board and clothes; I'd put the lid on scores of snaps, and pour into the teachers' laps the wealth that now away is sinned, for words and wigglejaws and wind.

Poe

INTO THIS WORLD, the poet Poe was born a hundred years ago; and in this world he lived and wrought, alone, and, understanding not; his feet toiled through this vale of tears; his spirit roamed in other spheres. A dreamer from Parnassus hurled, into a sordid workday world, where gold the god of all things seems, and men who dream must live on dreams. And so, with shades the poet talked, and so with ghosts the poet walked, and watched, with Psyche hand in hand, a world he could not understand.

Uncle Walt

Gay Parents

THE CHILDREN of our neighborhood don't train their parents as they should; they let the latter go their gait, and do not try to keep them straight, and so those giddy parents roam, at sinful hours, away from home. They try to cheer their foolish hearts, joy-riding in the devil-carts; or you will find, when they are missed, that they are playing bridge or whist, or wasting all the golden day in some absurd and useless way. When I was young I seldom saw a sporty pa or giddy ma; the children of that elder day had parents tutored to obey; the mothers seldom left their tubs to fool around at euchre clubs, and fathers, when the day was dead, took off their rags and went to bed. Ah, seldom then were children seen, with furrowed brow and sombre mien, distraught by galivanting dads, or mas who played the cards for scads! O children, to yourselves be true! Round up the galivanting crew of parents who are trotting fast, before it is too everlast—ing late to give the bunch a chance; come forth, O children, from your trance!

Dad

DAD IS growing old and weary and there's silver in his hair, and his eyes are always solemn, he has seen so much of care; he has seen so much of sorrow, he has known so much of tears, he has borne the heat and burden of so many bitter years! Dad's already in the twilight of life's little fleeting day, and perhaps we'll often ponder, when his load is laid away, on the steps we might have saved him when his feet and hands were sore, on the joy we might have given to the heart that beats no more. We'll recall a hundred errands that we might have gladly run, and a hundred kindly actions that we might have gaily done; we'll remember how he labored, while the boys were all at play, when the darkness hides him from us at the closing of the day.

John Bunyan

THE VILLAGE Marshal, watchful wight, was bound to hold his job down right. He saw John Bunyan running loose, and put him in the calaboose. Now John, the tinker, had renown for jarring up the little town, and all the local sages said that he would never die in bed. But when he found himself in soak, he said: "The sporting life's no joke; here's where I cut it out and strive to show the world that I'm alive." And in that dark and dismal den he sat, with paper, ink and pen, and wrote the book that people hold as being worth its weight in gold. The job was hard; in cells beneath, they heard the grinding of his teeth; whene'er he wrote a sentence wise, he had to stop and swat the flies; the grub was poor, the water foul, the jailer sombre as an owl; the jail was full of dirt and dust, the chains he wore were brown with rust. Yet through it all, by hook or crook, he toiled and wrote his matchless book! O, authors of the present day, whose books are dry as bales of hay, who grind "best sellers" by the ton, which last from rise till set of sun, who roll in comfort and ice cream, dictating stories by the ream, try Bunyan's plan—it may avail—and write a masterpiece in jail!

"My country, hear my word! you are a humming bird, also a peach!"

A Near Anthem

MY country, beauteous land! I'll sing, if you will stand, a song to thee! My harp is rather coarse, my voice is somewhat hoarse, yet will I try to force some melody. Fair land that saw my birth, gem of the whole blamed earth, hark to my screeds! Tell me, O tell me why prices have soared so high that man can scarcely buy things that he needs. Things that a man must eat—lemons and prunes and meat—cost like Sam Hill; carpets and rugs and mats, neckties and shoes and hats, shirting to hide his slats, empty his till. All through the week I work, like an unlaundered Turk, for a few bucks; no odds how hard I try, of wealth I'm always shy, and when I travel I ride on the trucks. They say that half a plunk bought more and better junk, in the old days, than will two bones or more, in the big modern store, since prices learned to soar, five hundred ways. My country, hear my word! You are a hummingbird, also a peach! Splendid in peace and war, thou most effulgent star —tell me why prices are clear out of reach!

Uncle Walt

The Yellow Cord

WHEN a tiresome Chinese statesman bores his queen or overlord, he receives a little package that contains a yellow cord; and the statesman realizes that it is no use to roar, so he hangs himself in silence to the nearest sycamore. Let us borrow from the wisdom of the rulers of Cathay! Let us put this grand old custom into common use today! Let the President distribute samples of the saffron string, to the statesmen who have bored us since the early days of spring, with their figures and statistics and their buncombe and hot air, and their misfit oratory which won't lead us anywhere. We might all, perhaps, be rescued, from an ordeal that's abhorred, if Big Bill would send the talkers twenty feet of yellow cord!

The Important Man

YOU KNOW the man of kingly air? You run across him everywhere. He seems to think his hat a crown; he talks as though he handed down most all the wisdom that the seers have gathered in a thousand years. His dignity is most sublime; to joke about him is a crime, and when you meet him it is wise to lift your hat and close your eyes; and it would please him if you'd just lie down and grovel in the dust. That is the wiser course, I say, but I'm a feeble-minded jay, and when I meet the swelled-up man, I jolly him the best I can; I would to him the fact recall that he's but mortal, after all. He's naught but bones and legs and trunk, and lungs and lights, and kindred junk; he breathes the same old germy air that's breathed by hoboes everywhere. And when he dies, as die he must, he'll make as cheap a grade of dust as any Richard Roe in town; the monument that holds him down may tell his glories for a while, but folks will read it with a smile, and say: "That dead one must have thought that he was Johnnie on the spot, when he was on this earthly shore; I never heard of him before."

Uncle Walt

Toddling Home

A THOUSAND cares oppress the mind, in life's long summer day; we weary of the galling grind, and endless seems the way. The journey's really not so long; we have not far to roam; and soon we'll hear the evensong, and then we'll toddle home. Our burdens seem an awful pile, and yet they're not so great; if we would pack them with a smile, we would not feel the weight. We murmur as we hold the plow, and guide it through the loam; but dusk is coming, even now, and soon we'll toddle home. We see a cloud of sullen gray, and straightway we repine; "the storm is rising fast," we say, "the sun no more will shine." But in a space his golden beams will light the azure dome, until shall come the time for dreams, and then we'll toddle home. No trouble lasts if we are brave, and take a manly stand; and Fear becomes a cringing slave, if we but raise a hand; the evil that disturbs our rest is but a shadow gnome; the sun is sinking in the west, and soon we'll toddle home. Then let us toddle home as gay as birds, that never weep; as glad as children, tired of play, who only wish to sleep; and while Recording Angels write our names in heaven's tome, we'll seek our couch, and say good night when we have toddled home.

Uncle Walt

Trifling Things

THE WISE MAN, with some boys in tow, beheld a pin upon the ground. "My lads," he said, his face aglow, "come here and see what I have found! 'Tis but a pin, a humble pin, on which the passing thousands tread, and some unthinking men would grin, to see me lift it from its bed. And yet, my lads, the trifles count; the drops of water make the sea; the grains of sand compose the mount, and moments make eternity. Each hour to man its chances brings, but he will gain no goodly store, if he despises little things, nor sees the pin upon his floor. I stoop and grasp this little pin; I'll keep it, maybe, seven years; it yet may let the sunshine in, and brighten up a day of tears." The Wise Man bent to reach the pin, and lost his balance, with a yell; he hit the pavement with his chin; his hat into the gutter fell; he rolled into a crate of eggs, and filled the air with dismal moans, and then a dray ran o'er his legs, and broke about a gross of bones. They took him home upon a door, and there he moans—so tough he feels: "Those dad-blamed children never more will listen to my helpful spiels!"

Trusty Dobbin

THEY DOOM you, Dobbin, now and then, they say your usefulness is gone; some blame fool thing designed by men has put the equine race in pawn. They doomed you, and your hopes were low, when bicycles were all the rage; they said: "The horse will have to go—he lags superfl'ous on the stage!" They doomed you when the auto-car was given its resplendent birth. "Thus sinks the poor old horse's star—he'll have to beat it from the earth!" And now they're dooming you some more, there are so many motor things; men scorch the earth with sullen roar, or float around on hardware wings. They doom you, Dobbin, now and then, and call you has-been, and the like; but while this world is breeding men, the horse will still be on the pike. No painted thing of cogs and wheels and entrails made of noisy brass can e'er supplant a horse's heels, or make man grudge a horse his grass. No man-made trap of bars and springs can love or confidence impart, nor give the little neigh that brings emotion to the horseman's heart. O build your cars and ships and planes, and doom old Dobbin as you will! While men have souls and hearts and brains, old Dobbin shall be with us still!

Uncle Walt

The High Prices

AT THE hash-works where I board, but one topic now prevails: "How the price of grub has soared!" Drearily the landlord wails. In his old, accustomed place, he is sitting, at each meal; sad and corpse-like is his face, as he carves his ancient veal. When I ask that solemn jay, if he'll pass the butter 'round, "butter costs," I hear him say, "almost half a bone a pound." When I want a slice of duck, his expression is a sin; "this thin drake cost me a buck, and the quacks were not thrown in." Through the muddy coffee's steam, I can hear him saying now: "I desired a pint of cream, and they charged me for a cow." "Let me have some beans," I cried —I was hungry as could be; "sure!" he wearily replied; "shall I give you two, or three? Beans," he said, "long years ago, of rank cheapness were the signs; now they cost three scads a throw—and you do not get the vines." Once, at morn, I wished an egg, and the landlord had a swoon; with his head soaked in a keg, he regained his mind by noon; "once," he moaned, "an egg was cheap; times have changed, alas! since then; now the price would make you weep —and they don't throw in the hen!"

Uncle Walt

Omar Khayyam

OMAR, of the golden pen, come, O come to us again! 'Neath thy fig-tree and thy vine, with thy bread and jug of wine, seat thyself again, and write, in the caustic vein, or light. Thou who swatted many heads, tore so many fakes to shreds, made the ancient humbugs hump, kept the wise guys on the jump—come, great Omar, from the mists, come and swat thy parodists! Come and give the rhymesters fits—all the jingling, grass-fed wits, who profane thy noble verse; come and place them in the hearse! They who love the Khayyam strain, treasure from a master's brain, satire keen as tested steel—they who love old Omar feel that the imitative crew should receive the wages due, be rewarded for their toil with a bath in boiling oil. But the law is in the way; if the poets we should slay, we'd be pulled by the police for disturbance of the peace. Come, then, Omar, from the shade, where thou hast too long delayed, and with sundry skillful twists, wipe out all those parodists.

Uncle Walt

The Grouch

IT'S ALL very well to be nursing a grouch, when everything travels awry, and you haven't the pieces-of-eight in your pouch to pay for a cranberry pie; it's all very well to use language galore, and cover your whiskers with foam; you may prance around town with a head that is sore —but it's beastly to carry it home! You may be discouraged and worn by the strife; then make all your kicks on the street, for the man who will wear out his grouch on his wife, isn't fit for a cannibal's meat; if troubles and worries are beating you down, and bringing gray hairs to your dome, 'twill do in the office to carry a frown, but it's ghoulish to carry it home! The Lord, who made sparrows and Katy H. Dids, loves the man who is stalwart and brave, who cheerily goes to his wife and his kids, though his hopes may be fit for the grave; but the Lord has no use for the twenty-cent skate, whose courage is weak as the foam; who piles up his sorrows, and shoulders the weight, and carefully carries it home!

Uncle Walt

The Pole

I'M GLAD I didn't find the Pole, up there where Arctic billows roll. When first I heard the Pole was lost, for one brief day my wires were crossed; I said: "Methinks I'd better go across the weary wastes of snow, along the white bear's lonely track, and find the Pole, and bring it back. Thus shall I scale the heights of fame, and grow sidewhiskers on my name. I'll be a bigger man than Taft; I'll work the soft Chautauqua graft, and earn a package of long green by writing for a magazine; I'll have some medals in my trunk, and silver cups, and other junk; and kings and queens will cry, with pride, that I'm all wool and three yards wide. So let me hire some Eskimos, and hit the nice cool Arctic snows." But here my granny intervened, and said: "Those stovepipes must be cleaned; you haven't mowed the lawn this week, and it's a sight to make one shriek; there's something clogging up the flue—you ought to wash the buggy, too, and there are forty thousand chores, and here you stand around outdoors, and mumble like a heathen Turk"—and then, my friends, I got to work.

Uncle Walt

Wilhelmina

LONG LIFE to you and Holland's heir, Wilhelmina! May all your days be bright and fair, Wilhelmina! And may the babe grow wise and great, and chic and slick and up-to-date, and learn to keep her crown on straight, Wilhelmina! O bring her up with steady hand, Wilhelmina! And train her mind, to beat the band, Wilhelmina! And if you catch her chewing gum, or flirting with a rah-rah chum, then take a strap and make things hum, Wilhelmina! Don't let her fool away her time, Wilhelmina, in painting or in writing rhyme, Wilhelmina; but let her know that glory lies in knowing how to make mince pies, and stews and roasts and fancy fries, Wilhelmina. And if by worries you're perplex'd, Wilhelmina, and don't know what you should do next, Wilhelmina, then come to us for good advice—we always keep a lot on ice—we'll solve your problems in a trice, Wilhelmina.

Uncle Walt

Wilbur Wright

HE'S WON success where others failed; he's built a weird machine, composed of cranks and doodads and propelled by gasoline, that circles proudly overhead, as graceful in its flight, as any eagle that cavorts along the airy height. When Wilbur and his brother bold began their march to fame, the sages of the village sneered, and said: "What is their game? Do these here loonies really think that they can make a trap of iron and brass and canvas things, and junk and other scrap, with which to leave the solid earth, and plow the atmosphere? By jings! It isn't safe for them to be at large, that's clear." But Wilbur and his brother bold, whose courage never fails, kept on a-patching up their trap with wire and tin and nails, they built a new cafoozelum, improved the rinktyram, and tinkered up the doodlewhang until it wouldn't jam; and then one morning up they flew, and all the village seers just stood around and pawed the ground and chewed each other's ears. Good luck be with those Dayton boys—good luck in every flight! It is a pleasant rite to write that Wright is strictly right!

Uncle Walt

The Broncho

YOU HAVEN'T much sense, but I love you well, O wild-eyed broncho of mine! Your heart is hot with the heat of hell, and a cyclone's in your spine; your folly grows with increasing age; you stand by the pasture bars, and bare your teeth in a dotard rage, and kick at the smiling stars. As homely you as the face of sin, with brands on your mottled flanks, and saddle scars on your dusky skin, and burs on your tail and shanks! and old—so old that the men are dead, who branded your neck and side; and their sons have lived and gone to bed, and turned to the wall and died. But it's you for the long, long weary trail, o'er the hills and the desert sand, by the side of the bones of the steeds that fail and perish on either hand. It's you for the steady and tireless lope, through canyon or mountain pass; to be flogged at night with a length of rope, and be fed on a bunch of grass.

"And then I float away, away, to moonlit castles in Cathay."

Uncle Walt

Schubert's Serenade

THERE IS no tune that grips my heart, and seems to pull me all apart, like this old Serenade; it seems to breathe of distant lands, and orange groves and silver sands, and troubadour and maid. It's freighted with a gentle woe as old as all the seas that flow, as young as yesterday; as changeless as the stars above, as yearning as a woman's love for true knight far away. It seems a prayer, serene and pure; a tale of love that will endure when they who loved are dust, when earthly songs are heard no more, and bridal wreaths are withered sore, and wedding rings are rust. It's weary with a lover's care; it's wailing with a deep despair, that only lovers learn; and yet through all its sadness grope the singing messengers of hope for joys that will return. O, gentle, soothing Serenade! When I am beaten down and frayed, with all my hopes in pawn, when I've forgotten how to laugh, I wind up my old phonograph, and turn the music on! And then I float away, away, to moonlit castles in Cathay, or Araby or Spain, and underneath the glowing skies I read of love in damsels' eyes, and dream, and dream again!

Mazeppa

MAZEPPA, strapped upon a steed, made sixty miles at frightful speed; through lowland, valley and morass, through verdant strips of garden sass, o'er mountain, brake and flowing stream, he sped, as though propelled by steam. The bear sat up to see him go, the wolves pursued, but had no show; and when at last he reached a town, his dying charger tumbled down. Mazeppa rose, without a scratch, and swiftly wrote a long dispatch, which reached the Sporting Ed. that night: "I've knocked the record flat, all right. No other fellow, anywhere, has traveled on a knee-sprung mare o'er sixty miles of right of way, while trussed up like a bale of hay. Please hire a hall; a statement write, that I will lecture every night, for twenty years—my lecture's fine—the moving picture rights are mine. If any challenger should come, and put up a substantial sum, and say that he'd be glad to ride, upon a raw-boned hearse horse tied, for sixty miles or maybe more, for money, marbles, chalk or gore, just say my last long ride is made, until the lecture graft is played."

Fashion's Devotee

SHE CALLED upon her lawyer, and said to him: "Of course this visit will surprise you—I want a nice divorce." "Why, madam," cried the lawyer, "you're talking through your hat; your husband just adores you, and all the town knows that." "Of course I know he loves me," she answered, with a smile, "but that will cut no figure—divorces are in style. Decrees were won in triumph by friends of mine, of late, and every time I meet them I feel so out of date! I've just come from a party—the swellest of the town; I felt like some old woman who wears a last year's gown; and all the ladies chattered of husbands in their string, decrees of separation, and all that sort of thing." "But, madam," said the lawyer, "what reasons can you give? For better, finer husbands than yours, I think, don't live." "What do I want with reasons?" she answered, in a huff; "I want a separation, and that should be enough; I want the rare distinction a court of justice lends; I'm feeling too old-fashioned among my lady friends. I must have some good reasons? I do not think you're nice; his name is William Henry—that surely will suffice?"

Uncle Walt

Christmas

THE CHRISTMAS bells again ring out a message sweet and clear; and harmony is round about, and happiness is near; so let us all sing, once again, as on an elder day: "God rest you, merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay!" Forget the office and the mart, the week-day hook and crook, and loosen up your withered heart, as well as pocketbook; forget the ledger and the pen, and watch the children play; God rest you, merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay! The Christmas time with peace is fraught, from strife and sorrow free; and every wish and every thought should kind and gentle be; in worlds beyond our mortal ken this is a holy day; God rest you, merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay! Today, from Eden's plains afar, the shepherds converse hold, and watch again the risen star, as in the days of old; and as those shepherds watched it then, so may we watch today; God rest you, merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay!

The Tightwad

THE TIGHTWAD is a pleasant soul who freezes strongly to his roll, until he hasn't any; his bundle colors all his dreams, and when awake he's full of schemes to nail another penny. He counts his roubles day by day, and when a nickel gets away, it nearly drives him dotty; he grovels to the man of biz who has a bigger roll than his, and to the poor he's haughty. All things upon this earth are trash that can't be bought or sold for cash, in Tightwad's estimation; the summer breeze, because it turns the cranks of mills and pumps and churns, receives his toleration; the sun is useful in its way; it nourishes the wheat and hay—so let the world be sunny; he likes to hear the raindrops slosh; they help the pumpkin, beet and squash, and such things sell for money. The tightwad often is a bear around his home, and everywhere, and people hate or fear him; since kindness has no market price, it's waste of effort to be nice to victims who are near him. Methinks that when the tightwad dies, and to his retribution flies, his sentence will be funny; they'll load him with a silver hat, and boil him in a golden vat, and feed him red-hot money!

Uncle Walt

Blue Blood

MY SIRES were strong, heroic men, who fought on many a crimson field; and none could better cut a throat, or batter down a foeman's shield; and some were knighted by the king, and went around with golden spurs, which must have been a nuisance when they walked among the cockleburs. Their sires were barons of the Rhine, who worked a now historic graft; they held up travelers by day, and quaffed their sack at night, and laughed; they always slept upon the floor, and never shaved or cut their hair; they pawed their victuals with their hands, and never heard of underwear. Their sires, some centuries before, ran naked through the virgin vales, distinguished from the other apes because they hadn't any tails. And they had sires, still farther back, but that dim past is veiled to me, and so I fear I cannot claim a really flawless pedigree.

The Cave Man

WHEN THE cave man found that he needed grub to fill out the bill of fare, he went out doors with his trusty club, and slaughtered the nearest bear; and thus he avoided the butcher's fake of selling a pound of bone, and charging it up as the sirloin steak that you ordered by telephone. The cave man wore, as his Sunday best, the skin of a sheep or goat, and a peck of whiskers on his breast, in lieu of a vest or coat; so he nothing knew of the tailor's knack of sewing a vest all wrong, and making a coat with a crooked back, and the pants half a foot too long. The cave man swallowed his victuals raw, as he sat on his nice mud floor; and his only tool was his faithful jaw, and he wanted for nothing more. He took his drinks at the babbling brook, and healthy and gay was he; and he never swore at the bungling cook for spoiling the pie or tea.

Uncle Walt

Rudyard Kipling

ALAS FOR R. KIPLING! When he was a stripling, and filled with the fire of his age, he looked like a dinger —the all-firedest singer that ever wrote rhymes by the page. His harpstrings he pounded with vim till they sounded like strains of a Homeric brand, and people, in wonder, inquired who in thunder was filling with music the land. "At last—now we know it—the world has a poet, who'll set all the rivers afire," in this way we hailed him, when critics assailed him, and knocked on his bargain sale lyre. The years have been flying, and old bards are dying, and some of the young have been called; and Rudyard the rhymer is now an old timer, string-halted and painfully bald. And harder and harder, with counterfeit ardor, he whangs at his lusty old lyre; it's kept caterwauling and wailing and squalling, when it ought to be flung in the fire. O hush up its clangor! In sorrow, not anger, we proffer this little request; let's think of the stripling—the long vanished Kipling, and let the old man take a rest.

Uncle Walt

In Indiana

THAT HOOSIER country's most prolific of folks who scale the heights of fame; excelling in the arts pacific, they give their state a lustrous name. There old Jim Riley writes his verses, and wears, without dispute, the bays; George Ade must pack around six purses to hold the dough he gets for plays. Booth Tarkington is fat and wheezy, from dining on the market's best; he's living on the street called Easy, and gives his faculties a rest. Abe Martin also is a Hoosier, and hands out capsules good to see; and when you take 'em you will lose your suspender buttons in your glee. And Nicholson and many others are writing stuff that hits the spot; O, surely Indiana mothers a most unique and gifted lot! And I've received a little volume, concerning Indiana's crops; it gives the figures, page and column, and rambles on and never stops. It gives the yield of sweet potatoes, and corn and wheat and pigs and eggs, and cabbages and green tomatoes, and sauer kraut packed in wooden kegs. And never once in all the story are any of those writers named; poor Indiana's truest glory is missed—she ought to be ashamed.

Uncle Walt

The Colonel at Home

OH, TUMBO, Bwana Tumbo, we are glad you're back again, with the lion that you slaughtered in its cheap but useful den; with your crates of anacondas and your sack of crocodiles—we are glad indeed to see you, and the land is wreathed in smiles! For we missed you, Bwana Tumbo, when you roamed the distant field, killing camels with the weapon that no other man could wield; and the rust of peace was on us, and our martial spirits fell, and our lives grew stale and stagnant, and we got too fat to yell. Oh, the land was like a homestead when the boss is gone away, when the women sit and mumble and the kids refuse to play. But you're with us now, B. Tumbo, with the skins of beasts you slew, with the bones of bear and walrus and the stately kangaroo, and the gloom has left the shanty, and we moon around no more, for the colonel's quit his hunting, and his face is at the door!

The June Bride

HERE SHE comes, and she's a sight, in her gown of snowy white, thing of beauty and of charm, leaning on her lover's arm! Bright her eyes as summer skies, and a glory in them lies, borrowed from the realms above, where the only light is love. And her lover looks serene, shaven, perfumed, groomed and clean; pride is glowing in his eyes, that he's won so fair a prize. Lover, lover, do your best, ne'er to wound that gentle breast; lover, never bring a smart, to that true and trusting heart! Strive to earn the love you've won, as the years their courses run, knowing ever, as you strive, that no man who is alive, and no man since Adam died, e'er deserved a fair June bride!

Uncle Walt

At The Theatre

I WENT last night to see the play—a drama of the modern kind; and I am feeling tired today; I'd like to fumigate my mind. I'd hate to always recollect those tawdry jokes and vicious cracks; for I would fain be circumspect, and keep my brain as clean as wax. The playwright did his best to show that married life is flat and stale; that homely virtues are too slow to prosper in this earthly vale; he put Deceit on dress parade, and put a laurel crown on Vice; and Honor saw her trophies fade, and Truth was laid upon the ice. "It held the mirror up to life," and I, who saw it, homeward went, and got a club and beat my wife, and robbed an orphan of a cent. If I saw many plays so rank, so full of dark and evil thought, I'd steal a blind man's savings bank, or swipe a widow's house and lot. You may be lustrous as a star, with all the virtues in you canned, but if you fool around with tar you'll blacken up to beat the band. You may be wholesome as the breeze that chortles through a country lane, but if you eat Limburger cheese, your friends will pass you with disdain. And every time you see a play, or read a book that makes a jest of love and home you throw away some part of you that was the best.

Uncle Walt

Club Day Dirge

NOW MY WIFE is reading papers on the Fall of Ancient Rome, and I find myself, her husband, doing all the work at home; I have washed the dinner dishes, I have swept the kitchen floor, and I've pretty near decided that I'll do it never more. For the soap gets in my whiskers and the grease gets on my clothes, and I'm always dropping dishes and big sadirons on my toes; and I cannot herd the children while I'm scrubbing, very well, two have vanished in the distance, three have fallen in the well; and I'm always using coal oil where I should use gasoline, so the stove is blown to pieces, and the roof has holes, I ween. And the neighbors come and chaff me, laugh like horses at the door, as I slop around in sorrow, wiping gravy from the floor. So methinks I'll ask the missus after this to run our home, and I'll do a stunt of reading papers on the Fall of Rome.

"Like some lone mountain in the starry night."

Uncle Walt

Washington

LIKE SOME lone mountain in the starry night, lifting its head snow-capped, severely white, into the silence of the upper air, serene, remote, and always changeless there! Firm as that mountain in the day of dread, when Freedom wept, and pointed to her dead; grim as that mountain to the ruthless foe, wasting the land that wearied of its woe; strong as that mountain, 'neath his load of care, when brave men faltered in a sick despair. So does his fame, like that lone mountain, rise, cleaving the mists and reaching to the skies; bright as the beams that on its summit glow, firm as its rocks and stainless as its snow!

Hours and Ponies

EVERY HOUR that's gone's a dead one, and another comes and goes; in the graveyard of the ages hours will find their last repose; and the hour that's come and vanished never can be used again; you may long to live it over, but the longing is in vain. Lasso, then, the hour that's with you, ride it till its back is sore; you can have it sixty minutes—sixty minutes, and no more. Make it earn its board and lodging, make it haul your private wain, for when once it slips its halter it will never work again. So the hours like spotted ponies trot along in single file, and we haven't sense to catch them and to work them for a mile; we just loaf around and watch them, sitting idly in the sun, and the darkness comes and finds us with but mighty little done.

Uncle Walt

The Optimist

WE'RE ALWAYS glad when he drops in—the pilgrim with the cheerful grin, who won't admit that grief and sin, are in possession; there are so many here below, who coax their briny tears to flow, and talk forevermore of woe, with no digression! The man who takes the cheerful view has friends to burn, and then a few; they like to hear his glad halloo, and loud ki-yoodle; they like to hear him blithely swear that things are right side up with care; they like to hear upon the air, his cock-a-doodle. The Long Felt Want he amply fills; he is a tonic for the ills that can't be reached with liver pills, or porous plasters; he helps to make the desert bloom; he plants the grouches in the tomb; he's here to dissipate the gloom of life's disasters!

A Few Remarks

I GAILY sought the picnic ground, where children sported in the shade; with them I frolicked round and round, and drank with them red lemonade; and life seemed very full and sweet, as joyous as the song of larks, until a guy got on his feet, and said he'd make a few remarks. I journeyed to the county fair, to view the products of the farm; I marveled at the pumpkins there, and carrots longer than your arm; and happiness was over all, there was no sign of care that carks, until a man, with lots of gall, got up to make a few remarks. Oh, I was born for joy and glee, to sing as blithely as the birds! My life, that should so sunny be, is darkened by a cloud of words; and when my prospects seem most fair, and trouble for its bourne embarks, some Windy Jim is always there, to rise and make a few remarks.

Uncle Walt

Little Things

LITTLE DROPS of water poured into the milk, give the milkman's daughters lovely gowns of silk. Little grains of sugar, mingled with the sand, make the grocer's assets swell to beat the band. Little bowls of custard, humble though they seem, help enrich the fellow selling pure ice cream. Little rocks and boulders, little chunks of slate, make the coal man's fortune something fierce and great. Little ads, well written, printed nice and neat, give the joyful merchants homes on Easy Street.

The Umpire

WHEN the home team loses a well fought game, it causes a lot of woe, but nothing is ever gained, my friends, by laying the umpire low; far better to let him fade away, and die of his soul's remorse, than to muss the diamond with his remains, or sit on his pulseless corpse. When I was younger I always slew the umpire whose work was bum, and now when I go to my downy couch, the ghosts of the umpires come, and moan and gibber around my bed and rattle their fleshless bones, and call me names of the rankest kind, in their deep, sepulchral tones. I always found, when an umpire died, and rode in the village hearse, that the fellow who came to take his place was sure to be ten times worse.

Uncle Walt

Sherlock Holmes

THE GREAT Detective had returned; he'd been some years away, and I supposed that he was dead, and sleeping 'neath the clay. Ah, ne'er shall I forget the joy it gave me thus to greet the king of all detectives in my rooms in Baker street! "I notice, Watson," Sherlock said, with smile serene and wide, "that since I left you, months ago, you've found yourself a bride." I had not spoken of the fact, so how did Sherlock know? I tumbled from my rockingchair, his knowledge jarred me so. "It's easy, Watson," said the sleuth; "deduction makes it plain; you ate an egg for breakfast and your chin still wears the stain; you haven't shaved for half a week—the stubble's growing blue—your pants are baggy at the knees, your necktie's on askew; your vest is buttoned crooked and your shirt is out of plumb; your hat has been in contact with a wad of chewing gum. You were something of a dandy in the good old days of yore—pass the dope, my dearest Watson; what's the use of saying more?"

Uncle Walt

I DO NOT LIKE the man who searches his mind for caustic things to say, about the preachers and the churches; he grows more common every day. The cynic is a scurvy tutor, whose head and creed are made of wood; he puts up little gods of pewter, and says that they "are just as good." He thinks that triumphs he is winning, and he emits a joyous laugh, if he can knock the underpinning from Faith, that is our rod and staff. He is a poor and tawdry victor, who would o'er dead religions walk; the church still lives, though fools have kicked her, since first she builded on a rock. I hear the mellow church bells ringing a welcome to that calm retreat; I hear the choir's sweet voices singing an anthem, reverent and sweet. And well I know the gentle pastor is pointing out the path to wend, and urging men to let the Master be evermore their guide and friend. And he, like all good men, is reaching for better, and for higher things; and so the message of his preaching—unlike the cynic's—comfort brings.

The Newspaper Graveyard

BENEATH the stones they sweetly sleep, the humble toilers of the press, no more to sorrow or to weep, no more to labor in distress. Here lies a youth upon whose tomb the tear of pity often drops; we had to send him to his doom, because he wrote of "bumper crops." Here sleeps the golden years away the fairest of the human tribe; we slew him at the break of day, because he called himself "ye scribe." Beneath that yew another sleeps, who did his work with smiling lips; we had to put him out for keeps when he referred to "flying trips." And one, the noblest of them all, is resting on the wind-swept hill; in writing up a game of ball, he spoke of one who "hit the pill." Hard by the wall, where roses bloom, and breezes sway the clinging vines, that youth is sleeping in his tomb, who used the phrase, "along these lines." Today the sexton wields his spade, and digs a grave both deep and wide, where soon the stripling will be laid, who wrote about "the blushing bride."

Uncle Walt

My Lady's Hair

SHE WALKS in beauty like the night, as some romantic singer said; her eyes give forth a starry light, her lips are of a cherry red; across the floor she seems to float; she seems to me beyond compare, a being perfect—till I note the way that she's done up her hair. She must have toiled a half a day to build that large, unwieldy mass; she must have used a bale of hay, and strips of tin, and wire of brass; her sisters must have helped to braid, her mother wrought and tinkered there, and butler, cook and chambermaid, all helped to wrestle with her hair. And after all the grinding toil, and all the braiding and the fuss, the one effect is just to spoil her beauty, and make people cuss. She walks in beauty like the night where nights are most serenely fair; but, J. H. Caesar! she's a sight, when she's got on her Sunday hair!

Uncle Walt

The Sick Minstrel

I CANNOT sing today, my dear, about your locks of gold, for my fat head is feeling queer since I have caught a cold; and when a bard is feeling off, and full of pills and care, and has to sit around and cough, he sours on golden hair. I cannot sing today, dear heart, about your coral lips; the doctor's coming in his cart; he's making daily trips; he makes me sit in scalding steam, with blankets loaded down, and people say they hear me scream half way across the town; he makes me swallow slippery elm and ink and moldy paste, and blithely hunts throughout the realm for things with bitter taste. I cannot sing today, my love, about your swanlike neck, for I am sitting by the stove, a grim and ghastly wreck. And many poultices anoint the summit of my head; I've coughed my ribs all out of joint, and I am largely dead; and so the mention of a harp just makes my blood run cold; some other blooming poet sharp must sing your locks of gold! Some other troubadour, my sweet, must sing to you instead, for I have earache in my feet and chilblains in my head!

The Beggar

HE HAD a little organ there, the which I watched him grind; and oft he cried, as in despair: "Please help me—I am blind!" I muttered, as his music rose: "He plays in frightful luck!" And then I went down in my clothes, and gave him half a buck. A friend came rushing up just then, and said: "You make me ache! You are the easiest of men—that beggar is a fake! The fraud has money salted down—more than you'll ever earn; he owns a business block in town, and he has farms to burn." I answered: "Though the beggar own a bankroll large and fat, I don't regret the half a bone I threw into his hat. I see a man who looks as though the world had used him bad; it sets my jaded heart aglow to give him half a scad. And though that beggar man may be the worst old fraud about, that makes no sort of odds to me; that isn't my lookout. I'll stake Tom, Harry, Dick or Jack, whene'er he comes my way; my conscience pats me on the back, and says that I'm O. K. But if a busted pilgrim came to work me, in distress, and I inquired his age and name, his pastor's street address, and asked to see the documents to prove he told no lies, before I loosened up ten cents, my conscience would arise and prod me till I couldn't sleep, or eat a grown man's meal; and so the beggar man may keep that section of a wheel."

Uncle Walt

Looking Forward

I LIKE to think that when I'm dead, my restless soul unchained, the things that worry my fat head will then all be explained. This fact a lot of sorrow brings, throughout this weary land; there are so many, many things, we do not understand! Oh, why is Virtue oft oppressed, and scourged and beaten down, while Vice, with gems of East and West, is flaunting through the town? And why is childhood's face with tears of sorrow often stained? When I have reached the shining spheres, these things will be explained. Why does the poor man go to jail, because he steals a trout, while wealthy men who steal a whale quite easily stay out? Why does affliction dog the man who earns two bones a day, who, though he try the best he can, can't drive the wolf away? Why does the weary woman sew, to earn a pauper's gain, while scores of gaudy spendthrifts blow their wealth for dry champagne? Why do we send the shining buck to heathen in Cathay, while in the squalid alley's muck white feet have gone astray? Such questions, in a motley crowd, at my poor mind have strained; but when I sit upon a cloud, these things will be explained.

Uncle Walt

The Depot Loafers

THE RAILWAY station in our town is seedy, commonplace and plain; yet scores of people rustle down and gather there to meet each train. The waiting room is bleak and bare, a place of never-ending din; yet fifty loafers gather there each day to see the train come in. The station agent's life is sad; the loafers made it grim and gray; they drive the poor man nearly mad, for they are always in the way. The passengers can only sob as they their townward way begin, for they must struggle through the mob that's there to see the train come in. The men who have their work to do are hindered in a hundred ways; in vain they weep and cry out "Shoo!" they can't disperse the loafing jays. These loafers always are the same; they toil not, neither do they spin; they have no other end or aim, than just to see the train come in. I've traveled east, I've traveled west, and every station in the land appears to have its loaferfest, its lazy, idle, useless band; I know the station loafer well; he has red stubble on his chin; he has an ancient, fishlike smell; he lives to see the train come in. Oh, Osler, get your chloroform, and fill your glass syringe again, and come and try to make things warm for those who bother busy men! For loafers, standing in the way, when standing is a yellow sin! For those who gather, day by day, to see a one-horse train come in!

Uncle Walt

The Foolish Husband

HE TOILED and sweated half his life to hang rich garments on his wife. "I haven't time to cut a dash," he said, "but I will blow the cash to let those swelled-up neighbors know that I have got the cash to blow." And so his good wife wore her furs, and dress parade was always hers; she had her gems from near and far, and glittered like an auto-car; she had a new and wondrous gown for every "function" in the town; her life seemed sunny, gay and glad, this wife who was her husband's ad. One night, his day of labor o'er, he found her weeping at the door, and when he asked her to explain, she stopped a while the briny rain, and cried: "This life my spirit fags! I'm tired of wearing flossy rags! I'm tired of chasing through the town, a dummy in a costly gown! I'd rather wear a burlap sack, or leather flynet on my back—and have you with me as of yore—than all the sables in the store! And if you really love your wife, you'll get back to the simple life. Don't try to gather all the dough that's minted in this world below; just earn enough to pay the freight, and let us live in simple state, in some neat shanty far away from pomp and fuss and vain display—some hut among the cockleburs, remote from jewelry and furs!"

"Boys (durn 'em!) will be boys!"

Uncle Walt

Hallowe'en

TONIGHT the boys will take the town, and doubtless turn it upside down; they'll sport around with joyous zest, and knock the landscape galley west; and when the morning comes I'll see my buggy in an apple tree; the sidewalk piled upon the lawn, the hens with all their feathers gone; I'll hear my trusty milkcow yell down at the bottom of the well, while Dobbin stands upon the roof and waves for help a frantic hoof. Last year the boys wrought while I slept, and in the morn I screamed and wept, when looking at the work they'd done, I said: "Next year I'll get a gun, and watch for these michievous souls, and shoot the darlings full of holes." But granny heard me, and she said: "While water's cheap, go soak your head; you once were young yourself, by George! and people voted you a scourge; you played so many fiendish tricks, you filled so many hats with bricks, that terror came to every one when you went forth to have some fun. The village pastor used to say: 'When that young rascal comes my way, I always beat a swift retreat—I'd rather have the prickly heat!'" And so I haven't bought a gun; and so the boys may have their fun; and if the morning should disclose the chimney filled with garden hose, the watchdog painted green and brown, the henhouse standing upside down, I'll make no melancholy noise, but say: "Boys (durn 'em!) will be boys!"

Rienzi to the Romans

HE STOOD ERECT, and having seen that artists for some magazine had sketched him in his proper pose, he cleared his throat, and blew his nose, and said: "Hi, Romans, you are slaves! You've not the price to buy your shaves! The good old sun's still on the turf, and his last beam falls on a serf! Great Scott, my friends, is freedom dead? O whence and whither do we tread? I view the future with alarm! We tremble 'neath the tyrant's arm, and ye may tremble, sons of Rome, until the muley cows come home, but you will still be in the hole, unless some fiery, dauntless soul, like me, shall lead you from the wreck, and soak the tyrant in the neck! And here I stand to cut the ice! I'm ready for the sacrifice! I'll save you, if a Roman can! As candidate for councilman, I ask your votes, and if I win I'll swat the tyrant on the chin. I'll represent the fourteenth ward, and represent it good and hard, and drive the grafters from their place, and kick the tryant in the face! Corruption in our Rome will die, if you'll support your Uncle Ri!"

The Sorrel Colt

A SORREL COLT, one pleasant day, ran round and round a stack of hay, and kicked its heels, and pawed the land, and reared and jumped to beat the band. The older horses stood around and swallowed fodder by the pound, and gave no notice to the kid that gaily round the haystack slid. I loafed along and murmured, then: "If horses were as mean as men, some old gray workhorse, stiff and sour, would jaw that colt for half an hour; methinks I hear that workhorse say: 'You think you're mighty smooth and gay, and you are fresh and sporty now, but when they hitch you to the plow, and strap a harness on your back, and work you till your innards crack, and kick you when you want to balk, and slug you with a chunk of rock, and cover you with nasty sores, and leave you freezing out of doors—O, then you won't kick up your heels! You'll know, then, how a workhorse feels!' But horses have no croaking voice, to chill the colt that would rejoice; no graybeard plug will leave its feed to make the heart of childhood bleed; no dismal prophecies are heard, no moral homilies absurd, where horses stand and eat their hay, and so the colts may run and play!"

Uncle Walt

Plutocrat and Poet

GOOD OLD opulent John D.! He would look with scorn on me; I consider I'm in luck, when I have an extra buck; buying ice or buying coal always keeps me in the hole, and when I have paid the rent I am left without a cent. Yet I'm always gay and snug, happy as a tumblebug, having still the best of times, grinding out my blame fool ryhmes! Old John D., on t'other hand, frets away to beat the band; he is burdened with his care—though he isn't with his hair—and his health is going back, and his liver's out of whack, and his conscience has grown numb, and his wishbone's out of plumb, and he's trembling all the day lest a plunk may get away. Better be a cornfed bard, writing lyrics by the yard, with an appetite so gay it won't balk at prairie hay, than to have a mighty pile, and forget the way to smile!

Uncle Walt

Mail Order Clothes

I BOUGHT me a suit of the Sears-buck brand, they said it was tailored and sewed by hand; they said it was woven of finest wool, and couldn't be torn by an angry bull; they said it was fine, and would surely last, till Gabriel tooteth the final blast. It was ten cents cheaper than suits I'd bought, from local dealers, who seemed quite hot, and shed a bucket of briny tears, when I bought my clothes of the Sawbuck Rears. I wore that suit when the day was damp, and it shrunk to the size of a postage stamp; the coat split up and the vest split down and I scared the horses all over town, for the buttons popped and the seams they tore, and the stiches gave, with a sullen roar. And I gave that suit to a maiden small, who found it handy to dress her doll.

Uncle Walt

Evening

LIFE'S LITTLE DAY is fading fast; upon the mountain's brow the sinking sun is gleaming red; the shadows lengthen now; the twilight hush comes on apace, and soon the evening star will light us to those chambers dim where dreamless sleepers are. And when the curfew bell is rung, that calls us all to rest, and we have left all worldly things, at Azrael's behest, O may some truthful mourner rise, and say of you or me: "Gee whiz! I'm sorry that he's dead! He was a honey bee! Whate'er his job he did his best; he put on all his steam, in every stunt he had to do he was a four-horse team. He thought that man was placed on earth to help his fellowguys; he never wore a frosty face, and balked at weeping eyes; the hard luck pilgrim always got a handout at his door, and any friend could help himself to all he had in store; he tried to make his humble home the gayest sort of camp, till Death, the king of bogies, came and slugged him in the lamp. I don't believe a squarer guy existed in the land, and Death was surely off his base when this galoot was canned!"

They All Come Back

THE STARS will come back to the azure vault when the clouds are all blown away; and the sun will come back when the night is done, and give us another day; the cows will come back from the meadows lush, and the birds to their trysting tree, but the money I paid to a mining shark will never come back to me! The leaves will come back to the naked boughs, and the flowers to the frosty brae; the spring will come back like a blooming bride, and the breezes that blow in May; and the joy will come back to the stricken heart, and laughter and hope and glee, but the money I blew for some mining stock will never come back to me!

The Cussing Habit

THE JACKAL is a beastly beast; and when it hankers for a feast, it has no use for nice fresh meat; the all-fired fool would rather eat some animal that died last year; and so the jackal, far and near, is shunned by self-respecting brutes, and slugged with rocks, and bricks, and boots. And men whose language is decayed, who make profanity a trade, are like the jackal of the wild, that hunts around for things defiled. In all your rounds you'll never find a healthy, clean and gentle mind possessed by any son of wrath whose language needs a Turkish bath. On great occasions there's excuse for turning ring-tailed cuss-words loose; the Father of his Country swore at Monmouth, and then cussed some more; that patient soul, the Man of Uz, with boils so thick he couldn't buzz, ripped off some language rich and brown, until old Bildad called him down. Great men, beneath some awful stroke let loose remarks that fairly smoke, and we forgive them as we write the story of their deeds of might. But little men, who swear, and swear, and thus pollute our common air, are foul and foolish as the frogs that trumpet in their native bogs.

Uncle Walt

John Bull

JOHN BULL looks forth upon the main, and heaves a sigh, as though in pain; he wipes away the tears and cries, in sorrow: "Blawst my blooming eyes! There's fungus growing on my realm! I need a hustler at the helm! These once progressive British isles are left behind a million miles; it was a blamed Italian chap that made that wireless message trap; a Frenchman made the whole world blink by flying safely o'er the drink; a Dutchman built a big balloon, in which he'll journey to the moon; and now I'm told, lud bless my soul, a Yankee's gone and found the Pole! Have Britons lost their steam and vim? Are we no longer in the swim? Are we content to tag behind, and trust in fate, and go it blind? Is this our England lying dead, with candles at her feet and head? Has Genius torn her robe and died, and have we naught to brace our pride?" A voice comes sighing o'er the land—a voice John Bull can understand; a female voice that's bright and gay, and in his ears it seems to say: "Cheer up! The gods are with you yet—you always have the suffragette!"

Uncle Walt

An Oversight

WE'RE MAKING laws, with lots of noise, to keep from harm our precious boys. The curfew bell booms out at eight, and warns the lads to pull their freight for home and bed and balmy sleep, while wary cops their vigils keep. The cheap toy pistol's down and out; we won't have things like that about; and boys who'd hear the pistol's toot must sit and watch their parents shoot. The cigarette at last is canned; the children of this happy land can buy such coffin-nails no more, which sometimes makes the darlings sore. Each year new laws and statutes brings, to shield them from corrupting things. It's strange that we should overlook the screaming blood-and-thunder book, the wild and wooly, red-hot yarn, that Johnnie reads behind the barn. The tales of bandits who have slain a cord of men, and robbed a train; of thieves who break away from jail, with punk detectives on their trail; of long haired scouts and men of wrath who nothing fear—except a bath. Such yarns as these our Johnnie reads; they brace him up for bloody deeds; and when he can he takes the trail, and ends his bright career in jail. So, while we're swatting evil things, and putting little boys on wings, let's swat the book that leaves a stain upon the reader's soul and brain.

Uncle Walt

The Traveler

HE HAD journeyed, sore and weary,
over deserts wide and dreary;
through the snows of far Sibery he
had dragged his frozen form; he had
searched the site of Eden, been through
Kansas, wild and bleedin'; in the far-off
hills of Sweden he had faced the winter
storm. In the vain pursuit of glory, hoping
he would live in story, he had hoofed it to
Empory, from Toronto on the lake; he had
heard land agents rattle through the
suburbs of Seattle, he had seen the Creek
of Battle, where they live on sawdust cake.
Fate was kind, and just to prove her he had
journeyed to Vancouver, where the emi-
grant and mover pitch their tents upon the
street; he had roamed the broad Savannah,
he had voted in Montana; hunting with
the mighty Bwana, Afric's jungles knew
his feet. He had sung the boomer's ditty
down in Oklahoma City, thinking it a
blooming pity that the town had such a
name; he had mined in cold Alaska, farmed
with Bryan in Nebraska, and was never
known to ask a least advantage in the game.
To his native town returning, all reporters
there were yearning to receive a statement
burning, from this calm intrepid soul; not
of fights or sieges gory was the hero's sim-
ple story; "I have but one claim to glory—
I have never found the Pole!"

Uncle Walt

Saturday Night

SATURDAY NIGHT, and the week's work done, and the Old Man home with a bunch of mon'! You see him sit on the cottage porch, and he puffs away at a five-cent torch, while the good wife sings at her evening chores, and the children gambol around outdoors. The Old Man sits on his work-day hat, and he doesn't envy the plutocrat; his debts are paid and he owns his place, and he'll look a king in the blooming face; his hands are hard with the brick and loam, but his heart is soft with the love of home! Saturday night, and it's time for bed! And the kids come in with a buoyant tread; and they hush their noise at the mother's look, as she slowly opens a heavy book, and reads the tale of the stormy sea, and the voice that quieted Galilee. Then away to bed and the calm repose that only honesty ever knows. Saturday night, and the world is still, and it's only the erring who finds things ill; there is sweet content and a sweeter rest, where a good heart beats in a brave man's breast.

Uncle Walt

Lady Nicotine

SMOKING is a filthy habit, and a big, fat, black cigar advertises that you're straying from the Higher Life afar. I have walked in summer meadows where the sunbeams flashed and broke, and I never saw the horses or the sheep or cattle smoke; I have watched the birds, with wonder, when the world with dew was wet, and I never saw a robin puffing at a cigarette; I have fished in many rivers when the sucker crop was ripe, and I never saw a catfish pulling at a briar pipe. Man's the only living creature that parades this vale of tears, like a blooming traction engine, blowing smoke from mouth and ears. If Dame Nature had intended, when she first invented man, that he'd smoke, she would have built him on a widely diff'rent plan; she'd have fixed him with a damper and a stovepipe and a grate; he'd have had a smoke consumer that was strictly up-to-date. Therefore, let the erring mortal put his noisome pipe in soak—he can always get a new one if he feels he needs a smoke.

"O come, my love, from your bower in haste, let us trim our sails for the ether waste, away, away!"

Uncle Walt

Up-to-Date Serenade

O COME, my love, for the world's at rest, and the sun's asleep in the curtained West, and the night breeze sighs from between the stars, and my airship waits by your window bars! We'll sail the sea of the waveless wind, we'll leave the earth and its dross behind, and watch its lights from the cloudy heights—O come, my love, on this best of nights! O come, my love, from your bower in haste, let us trim our sails for the ether waste, away, away, where the weary moan of the workday world is never known; where the only track is the track of wings that the skylark leaves when it soars and sings! So come, my love ere the night is old, and the stars have paled, and the dawn is cold; the ship can't wait for its precious freight, for it's costing a dollar a minute, straight.

Uncle Walt

The Consumer

THEY WILL tinker with the tariff till the rivers are gone dry, they will wrestle with the subject night and day; they'll be piling up the language when the snow begins to fly, they'll be fiddling in the same old weary way. O the grand old windy wonders who adorn the senate floor, till the windup of the world will be on deck; and there's just one thing that's certain, that is sure for ever more; the consumer always gets it in the neck. There is talk of hides and leather, and there's talk of nails and glue, there are weary wads of twaddle on cement; and the man from Buncombe Corners stands and toots his loud bazoo, till his language in the ceiling makes a dent; no one in this martyred country knows how long this will endure, and there isn't any way the flood to check; and there's just one thing about it that is reasonably sure; the consumer always gets it in the neck.

Advice To A Damsel

WHEN A DAMSEL has a steady who's a pretty decent man, and who shows a disposition to perform the best he can; who is shy of sinful habits, and whose bosom holds no guile, and who labors in the vineyard with a gay and cheerful smile, then she shouldn't make him promise that he'll do a seraph stunt, when they've stood up at the altar with the preacher-man in front; and she shouldn't spring a lecture when he comes around to court, for a man is only human, and his wings are pretty short. When a maiden has a lover who is surely making good, who is winning admiration, who is sawing lots of wood, then she shouldn't make him promise that he'll be an angel boy when the wedding ceremony ushers in a life of joy; she should murmur: "He's a daisy, and we'll take things as they come; for a man is only human, and his halo's on the bum."

Uncle Walt

A New Year Vow

I DON'T go much on gilded vows, for I have made them in the past, and they are with the bow-wow-wows—they were too all-fired good to last. And so I'll make one vow today: I'll simply try to do my best; that vow should help me on my way, for it embraces all the rest. I'll take the middle of the road, and always do the best I can, and pack along my little load, and try to be a manly man. A man may end his journey here too poor to buy a decent shroud, and planted be without a tear of mourning from the worldly crowd; but when he's in the judgment scale, he'll come triumphant from the test; no man has failed, no man can fail, who always, always does his best. And though my pathway be obscure, and void of honor and applause, and though the lean wolf of the moor to my cheap doorway nearer draws, I'll keep a stout heart in my breast, and follow up this simple plan; I'll always do my very best, and try to be a manly man.

The Stricken Toiler

HE LABORED on the railway track; his task would break a horse's back; he tugged at things that weighed a ton, and all the time the summer sun blazed down and cooked him where he toiled, and still he worked, though fried and broiled. I grieved for this poor section man, who drank warm water from a can, and ate rye bread and greenish cheese, and had big blisters on his knees. "Ods fish!" quoth I, "when day is dead, methinks you straightway go to bed, too labor-worn to heave a sigh, as wounded soldiers go to die." "That's where you're off," the toiler said; "I'm in no rush to go to bed; you must be talking in a trance—tonight I'm going to a dance!" "Gadzooks!" thought I, "and eke ods blood! My tears have streamed, a briny flood, because of all the cares and woes the horny-handed toiler knows! And it would seem, from what I learn, that he has fun, and some to burn. Gadzooks again! It seemeth plain, that weeping in this world is vain!"

The Lawbooks

THE LAWS are numerous as flies upon a summer day; at making laws the statesmen wise still pound and pound away. No man on earth could recollect a list of all the laws; I tried it once—my mind is wrecked, and now you know the cause. Some gents who are in prison yet proclaim with angry shout that they are so with laws beset, they really can't stay out. "A man can't walk around a block," I heard a sad man wail, "but what the cops will round him flock, and chuck him into jail." I heard the butcher man repine, and weep, and rail at fate, because he had to pay a fine for being short on weight. I heard the corner grocer snort, and use some language sour, because they yanked him into court for selling moldy flour. The milkman bottled half the creek, and sold it on his route; he said: "The law just makes me sick," when friends had bailed him out. The laws are numerous as scales upon a fish, no doubt; and so some people are in jails, and simply can't stay out; but all the time and everywhere one great truth stands out clear: The man who acts upon the square, has nothing much to fear.

Uncle Walt

Sleuths of Fiction

I'M WEARY now of Sherlock Holmes, and all the imitative crew; I'm tired of triumphs built upon a collar button, as a clew. The sleuth is always tall and thin, with nervous hands and hawk-like face; he scours the slums or moves around in marble halls, with equal grace; he always takes some kind of dope or plays the flute or violin, and when he's billed for active work he glues false whiskers on his chin. He always has a Watson near, a tiresome chump, who sits and broods, the while the selling-plater sleuth reels off a string of platitudes. Detective yarns are all so stale! The plot is evermore the same; we always have the murdered man, with knives or bullets in his frame; the pantry window is unlocked; the safe's been opened with a file; suspicion shifts until it rests on every man within a mile; the local peelers blunder round, and ball things up in frightful shape, and then the Great Detective comes, with lens and rule and meas'ring tape; he crawls around upon the floor, examines all the water mains, and tastes the ashes in the stove, and sticks his nose into the drains, and then he says the problem's solved; forthwith he spends two weeks or more in showing Watson and the world how easy 'tis to be a bore!

Put It On Ice

WHEN YOU have written a letter red hot, roasting some chap in his tenderest spot—some one who's done you an underhand trick, some one who's wounded your pride to the quick; try to remember that writing abuse does no more good than the hiss of a goose; this is the meaning of all of your sass: "You are a villain—and I am an ass." Take up your letter and read it through thrice; put it on ice awhile, put it on ice! Maybe your wife isn't much of a cook; maybe she'd rather sit down with a book, than to go fussing around making pies, doughnuts and cakes and things good to your eyes; you are preparing a withering speech, you are preparing to rear up and preach, telling your wife of the beautiful things cooked by your granny before she had wings; telling your wife that her duty's to stuff things in your tummy till it has enough. When you went courting that hausfrau of yours, swearing you'd love her while nature endures, did you get down on your knee-bones and rave: "Dearest, I'm needing a drudge and a slave! Come to my cottage and sweep, cook and scrub! Clean up the dishes and sweat at the tub!" Can the reproaches you're planning to make; go to a baker when spoiling for cake. Cut out the sermon you think is so nice—put it on ice awhile, put it on ice!

Uncle Walt

The Philanthropist

TEN MILLION bones," said good John Dee, "will reach the Sunny South from me; this hookworm scourge, that ruins men, and lays a country waste again, must be suppressed at any cost —those broken men must not be lost! To make them feel like men once more, to drive gaunt Famine from their door, to make them like strong Saxons live, ten million bones I'll freely give. The victims of the hookworm scourge, the toilers at the loom and forge, the humble yeoman at his plow, may see some ray of comfort now! I shudder when I read the tales of ruin in those Southern vales; too tired to do the simplest chores, men lounge all day about their doors, and when the sun's low in the West, the whole caboodle go to rest. And thus these tillers of the soil burn mighty little of my oil. When this outrageous worm decamps, they'll trim the wicks and light the lamps, and read the books they have in stock, and all sit up till one o'clock. The hookworm's acted very mean in shutting off the kerosene, and so I'll send a good big roll, to put the blamed thing in the hole."

Other Days

BACKWARD, turn backward, oh time, in thy flight, feed me on gruel again, just for tonight; I am so wearied of restaurant steaks, vitrified doughnuts and vulcanized cakes, oysters that sleep in a watery bath, butter as strong as Goliath of Gath; weary of paying for what I can't eat, chewing up rubber and calling it meat. Backward, turn backward, for weary I am! Give me a whack at my grandmother's jam; let me drink milk that has never been skimmed, let me eat butter whose hair has been trimmed; let me but once have an old-fashioned pie, then I'll be willing to curl up and die; I have been eating iron filings for years—is it a wonder I'm melting in tears?

Uncle Walt

The Passing Year

THE YEAR'S growing ashen, and weary and gray; full soon he will cash in, and mosey away. A while yet he'll totter along to his grave; he's marked for the slaughter, and nothing can save. The year that is leaving seems weighted with woe; and Nature is grieving because he must go. The forests are sighing and moaning all day; the night winds are crying, upon their sad way; the gray clouds are taking a threatening shape; the dead grass is shaking like billows of crape. Dame Nature is tender, and dirges she'll croon, regretting the splendor and glory of June; she knows that tomorrow the old year will sleep; she knows that the sorrow of parting is deep. In this world, O never can friends with us stay! Some loved one forever is going away! And that is the story of people and years; a morning of glory, an evening of tears; an hour of caressing, a call at the dawn, a prayer and a blessing, and then they are gone.

UNCLE WALT

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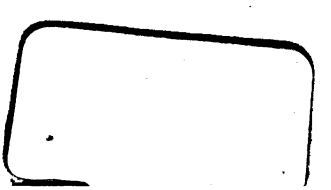

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